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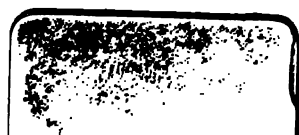
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**PLAIN AND PRACTICAL
SERMONS.**

**BY THE REV. JOSEPH JONES, M. A.,
OF NEWCHURCH.**

OXFORD: PRINTED BY D. A. TALBOYS.

PLAIN AND PRACTICAL
SERMONS

ON THE XIIITH, XIVTH, XVTH, XVITH, AND XVIITH
CHAPTERS OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

BY THE REV. JOSEPH JONES, M. A.
OF NEWCHURCH.



OXFORD: D. A. TALBOYS:

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P R E F A C E.

A FORMAL and elaborate preface to a plain and unpretending volume of Sermons like the present, would be altogether out of place ; as much so indeed as a splendid portico would be to a homely building. The reader will find here no display of talent and learning, of ingenuity and eloquence ; no search after what is striking and novel. If the volume have any worth, it arises from the circumstance of its being designed to unfold, in a practical manner, and in regular order, however imperfectly, a highly interesting portion of Holy Writ.

The writer of these pages views Christian godliness as essentially consisting in a deep, spiritual, and personal apprehension of man's apostasy from God—of his depraved nature, sinful life, and lost state ; and in a deep, spiritual, and personal apprehension of man's recovery to God through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. But he further views both these apprehensions to be the result, not of human reasoning or of philosophical speculation, but of the Almighty Agency of the Blessed Spirit of truth and grace on the soul ; and to be also productive of all those principles, affections, and conduct, (that is, of that universal holiness,) which become a redeemed and sanctified creature, who, notwithstanding inherent evil, the solicitations

of the senses and the allurements of the world, is seeking his happiness in the favour of God here, and in the presence of God hereafter. In a word, Repentance and Faith, or Humility and Trust, or Self-abasement and Looking unto Jesus, together with the moral excellence, both internal and external, vital and practical, which springs from them, where they really exist, as their genuine fruit, are regarded by him as the cardinal matters in religion; and it is to these that his attention is almost exclusively directed in the following pages: and all that he can expect, as indeed it is all that he desires, is, that, through the blessing of the ever-living Head of the Church, they may be made in some degree useful to the thoughtful, humble, and devout reader, who is satisfied with common scriptural instruction without the arts and ornaments of elegant writing; without refined abstractions, theological subtilties, or fervid and vehement declamation.

His readers will do him great injustice if they suppose, that he entertains the slightest idea, for a single moment, of his competency to unfold such a spiritual and profound portion of the revealed word in any thing like an adequate manner. He uses the language, not of affected humility, but of honest truth and heartfelt conviction, when he says that he looks on his observations on this discourse, or divine colloquy, of our Blessed Lord with his disciples, as nothing more than the feeble ideas and the imperfect stammerings of a child. In these chapters there are heights and depths of spirituality

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and sublimity, at the contemplation of which the serious mind cannot fail to learn its own weakness and blindness, while it also learns the riches and immensity of the divine wisdom, goodness, and glory. He is certainly the most exalted and happy Christian who can enter into them most fully : but while there is here a flood of mild and gracious light, there are also here some of the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness, which ought to inspire us with reverential awe, as well as with the most sacred delight and satisfaction.

He is not aware that he has much reason to apprehend the severity of censure from serious and candid minds : but whatever be the defects which may belong to his work, he has the consciousness of having done what he could according to his ability and opportunity. He therefore commits the volume to the public with every sentiment of respect, and with the earnest prayer that it may promote the high and holy cause for which it was written, and for which it is now sent into the world.

NEWCHURCH IN WINWICK,
APRIL 16, 1839.

SERMON I.


ST. JOHN, xiii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, (the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,) Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

THE inspired records are very concise and limited with regard to the history of our blessed Lord; but yet they put Him before us in a variety of important circumstances and deeply interesting attitudes: nor is it possible for us, if our minds and hearts are rightly disposed, to observe his conduct, or to listen to his words, without deriving at all times the greatest benefit. We behold Him on the mount, where He developed and inculcated the

pure, benevolent, and spiritual morals of his kingdom with convincing authority : nor with less force and clearness did He unfold its doctrines in the Temple and in the Synagogue. We behold Him surrounded with the crowds of the ignorant, the sick, and the destitute ; and we are compelled to admire the wisdom, power, compassion, and beneficence which He invariably exhibited. We see Him now a guest at the tables of the opulent, or we observe Him in the company of his chosen followers, or we accompany Him into the shades of retirement ; and we discover fresh displays of goodness, kindness, and piety. Wise and happy is that Christian who frequently employs his mind in the contemplation of the holy Jesus, our Example as well as our Redeemer : for, imploring the grace of the almighty Sanctifier, he will grow and flourish in that pure piety which is the happiness and glory of man.

The inspired volume, in the wisdom of God, is by no means calculated to gratify a vain curiosity ; but it is in all respects calculated to promote our welfare. Our blessed Lord was indefatigable as a Teacher ; but few only of his discourses are recorded : if, however, we study those few, with his profound and comprehensive parables, we cannot justly complain that our means of obtaining religious knowledge are defective. He knows but little of the depth and extent of the sayings of Jesus, who supposes that a cursory view of them will enable him to see their universality of application.



Considering, as we do, the ways of God to be perfect with regard to his word, as well as with regard to his works, we do not extol any one part of Scripture to the depreciation of any other part of it. All of it proceeds from the same divine Author ; and all is doubtless intended to promote the same object—the edification of man in truth and holiness. It is, however, a proper exercise of our minds to compare one part of Scripture with another, and to derive from each, as far as we can, the instruction which it was designed to convey to us. Scripture addresses itself, to speak so, to the whole of man ; but it is not composed systematically ; that is, the doctrines of revelation, and the circumstances, relations, and duties of man, are not formally stated in a regular order ; yet some parts regard man more especially in one point of view, and other parts in another. For instance, the Psalms, while they in fact contain every thing, more particularly describe man as a devout being, holding intercourse with God : while the Proverbs, which also contain every thing, relate to him more especially as a social agent—a member of the great human family. The same remark applies to the New Testament : for instance, the Sermon on the Mount is often viewed as a moral lecture : but more correctly speaking, it is a development and inculcation of the evangelical morality—a morality which is deep, spiritual, and holy—which relates to the heart as well as to the conduct of man. Doctrine, though not forgotten, is not discussed in it : it is a delineation of the Christian spirit and of

Christian conduct. But the affectionate discourse of our blessed Lord with his disciples, to which we wish to direct your attention in a series of Sermons, is of a very different character. It is a Consolatory Address, in which the doctrines of the gospel form the most prominent features, while at the same time the practical nature of the gospel is expressly and forcibly maintained. He, therefore, who wants rules for the regulation of his heart and conduct, will study the Sermon on the Mount : and he who at any time, and especially in seasons of distress, would comfort and animate his soul with the sublime and delightful discoveries of revelation, will study the words of Jesus to his anxious and dispirited followers.

In the verses that form our text, our blessed Lord is set before us in a manner, whether we examine the inward frame of his mind or his outward circumstances, that demands our serious consideration : and dull must our thoughts be, and dead our feelings, if we can meditate on Him as He is here delineated, without vivid emotions of grandeur and delight. What a union is here of the sublime, the affectionate, and the humble !

I. What were the Thoughts present to his mind at this time ? He knew that the traitor was before Him. He knew that Satan had put into the heart of Judas to betray Him. He knew that the hour of his own bitter and ignominious sufferings was speedily to arrive. But was there any gloom on his brow, or any depression on his spirits, or any complaint in his language ? He knew that his

hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father.' He knew 'that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God.' His thoughts were sublime. He felt within Himself the consciousness of his personal dignity, of his universal supremacy, and of his speedy advancement to his original and acquired glory. The darkness was now beginning to gather around Him; but instead of suffering it to oppress his mind and to produce any feeling of anguish, He considers his own character, and contemplates 'the joy that was set before Him.' He looks upward to the Father, to effulgent glory, to boundless dominion, to the radiant hosts above who would acknowledge his sceptre, and to the myriads on earth who through revolving ages would rejoice in his Name:—and thus with an undisturbed serenity does He engage in comforting and instructing his immediate followers.

And let the conduct of our blessed Lord be remembered by his faithful servants in their days of darkness and distress. Instead of brooding with aught of gloom on the sufferings which they feel or apprehend, let them consider whose they are, and what resplendent prospects lie before them. If their heavenly Father puts a bitter cup into their hands, or plants some sharp thorns in their path, or draws a deep cloud around them, shall their hearts be faint, or shall their language be that of despondency? Rather let them remember and imitate their great Example. Is not every hour,

whatever its colour be, bringing the true believer nearer to God? Does not every storm, however boisterous, and every wave, however menacing, drive the vessel nearer to the haven of repose? Is not all which a believer suffers a means, through grace, of fitting him for the world where suffering is unknown? Shall not divine faith triumph over human sense, and bring to the happy and rejoicing soul light in darkness, and the purest consolation even in the *deepest* distress? But,

II. What were the Feelings of our blessed Lord at this time? He had, it is manifest, two very different scenes in view: the one, the shame and sufferings which He was shortly to undergo; the other, the glory to which He was speedily to be advanced: and these might have so absorbed his attention as to have made Him unmindful of his disciples. But far different was the case. 'Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.' In vain shall we try to discover in Him the least portion of self-regard. He had chosen his followers; and in all his intercourse with them He had manifested towards them the purest friendship—instructing their ignorance, bearing their weakness, and correcting their errors. And now, when the hour of severest trial was approaching, instead of banishing the recollection of them from his heart, or only noticing them in a cursory manner, He retains his love for them, and gives them the most unequivocal proof of it; for, instead of employing the time, as He might have done, for his own comfort or benefit, He directs

his undivided attention to them, and consults their welfare and happiness, in the first place by a singular and significant action, and afterwards by a most appropriate conversation or address.

And here He has given a valuable lesson to his faithful followers: for what, in fact, does He say to us? ‘ Let your love of your friends, of those who are near and dear to you, be like the love of Christ to his disciples—firm and unfailing. Let not your circumstances, although they may be trying, make you unmindful of those whom you ought to remember. If your attention be confined to yourselves in the day of trial; if your pains, sorrows, or troubles cause you to banish from your thoughts those for whose welfare you ought to be solicitous; you certainly fail to copy Him who loved his own unto the end.’ Here also, then, let grace triumph over nature; and here let the truth and force, the excellence and beauty of Christian love shine forth. Show it in your words and actions, in trials and afflictions, in old age, and at the approach of death. The gospel uniformly enjoins and inculcates love: and we see in the text what our love is to be, and how it is to be exhibited. For,


III. What was the Conduct of our blessed Lord on this occasion? Having the sublimest contemplations in his mind, and the most affectionate feelings in his heart, we see Him assume the attitude of the deepest humility. ‘ He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and

to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.' The spirit of our Redeemer was love : it was also humility. The mere act of washing the feet of the disciples was in agreement with the manners of the Jews and other people of the east. The singularity of the thing consisted simply in this, that He who ought to have been ministered unto should undertake to minister ; that He who was the Maker and Lord of all things should perform that which belonged to the office of the lowest servant. What a striking contrast between his appearance on the mount of transfiguration and in the guest-chamber at the last passover ! There his 'face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light : ' but here there is no visible glory : on the contrary, we see Him place Himself on a level with the humblest ranks of his creatures. Such was His condescension. He had the most important instructions to communicate to his disciples for their correction and improvement : and his consciousness of his own dignity presents no barrier to his adoption of a measure by which they might be most effectually inculcated. He, therefore, voluntarily debases Himself on this occasion, and puts himself in an attitude at the view of which we are both astonished and delighted. There was no real diminution of his dignity in what He did. His conduct exhibited the purest humility, and gave to that virtue a rank and a prominence which ought never to be forgotten by any of his followers.

And here let us remember, that true humility will not disdain to perform the lowest services,

when the good of others is to be promoted by them. Our minds must, indeed, be perverted, if we do not admire the condescending conduct of Jesus. And is it possible for us to degrade ourselves when we copy his example? The cultivation of the Christian graces and virtues ought to be our daily employment while we are on earth : and what proof can we possibly give of our cultivating them, but by abounding in those actions which are the visible expression of them? Whatever our rank in life may be, and whatever may be our attainments in piety, and whatever exalted or refined subjects may at any time engage our minds, if Christian love and humility prevail within us as they ought, we shall not hesitate to engage in any humble labours that may contribute to the good of others. To act thus is to act as the Saviour did ; to reflect the lustre that shone forth in Him ; and to obtain that happiness and honour which nothing can confer upon us but a practical attention to the spirit and laws of the gospel.

The nature and design of the measure which our blessed Lord adopted on this occasion will be considered in two of the following discourses : we only observe at present, that the measure was a preliminary step to a development of truths of the highest order and of the most engaging character, singularly appropriate to the circumstances in which it was made, and to the persons to whom it was addressed ; but at the same time calculated, in the highest degree, to impart the noblest instructions and the purest consolations to every member of



the Church of Christ till the purposes of God on earth are accomplished. After the feet of disciples had been washed, the betrayer announced, the new commandment given, and the fall of Peter foretold, our Lord began his final address—final, we mean, with respect to his crucifixion. The future blessedness of the righteous, the person of Christ, faith in Him, the operations of the Holy Spirit, the exalted nature of spiritual piety, the peace bequeathed to the faithful, union with Christ, the necessity of all the fruits of righteousness, the contrariety between the world and the Church, the sufferings of the latter, the efficacy of prayer—such are the leading topics to which the attention of the disciples was directed. They were especially addressed through the whole discourse, with an immediate reference to their circumstances, and to the duties for the performance of which they had been selected and prepared. The whole that our Lord advanced had a primary and direct reference to them: but yet those sentences are very few which are so limited as to apply to the disciples only: so much did the great Prophet of his Church consult on this particular occasion the benefit of his people through all ages.

The enumeration of topics which we have given, is sufficient to show us that this discourse of our Lord is full of the highest interest. The cursory reader of it will, we apprehend, readily acknowledge the affectionate spirit which it breathes, the unaffected beauty with which it is adorned, the sublimity of its thoughts, and the truth and fidelity

with which it describes the inhabitants of our world. But it is only the devout and closely thinking reader of Scripture, who ponders on every sentence, that can have any thing like a proper view and apprehension of what is really advanced by our Lord; and in several places he will find himself on the borders of those depths and heights which teach him at the same time his weakness and his grandeur. We have here, if we may speak so, the rich beams of the descending sun, who shines with effulgent but soft and mellow splendour, and we are delighted with the beauty of a scene where all is tenderness and love: and as our inspection becomes more intense, we find ourselves in the midst of a celestial radiance too dazzling for the gaze of feeble mortals. In other words, the discoveries of our Lord invite and woo us to meditation; but, unfolding to our astonished minds the high and holy things of the spiritual world, the harmony, or rather the unity that subsists between the Father of lights and his reconciled creatures by virtue of redemption, we readily admit that they far exceed our comprehension at present. They are matters for our faith; and they are calculated, if duly improved, to confirm and invigorate, to enlarge and enliven our piety.

With delight and awe, with love and humility, with a consciousness of our ignorance and weakness, and with the fullest dependence on the influences of the Holy Spirit, it becomes us to enter upon, and to prosecute the examination of this portion of Scripture. In our discourses upon it, it

will invariably be our aim, as it is our earnest desire, to set before you those instructions which we think to be really contained in it : but we are very far from supposing that we can do justice to such a transcendent subject. Happy shall we be, if our remarks, through divine grace, lead you to study these chapters for yourselves, enable you in a measure to understand them, and induce you to apply faithfully to yourselves these sayings of the adorable Emmanuel. We have no learning to exhibit, no talents to display, no favourite system or peculiar notions to promulge or to defend : we only wish to advance what is truly scriptural in a plain manner : and may the great Head of the Church prosper our labour, through the accompanying power of the promised Spirit, that what we advance may promote your present happiness and eternal welfare.

Having thus slightly glanced at the wide and varied field that lies before us, we conclude the present discourse, exhorting you not to forget what has been advanced as the illustration of the text. You have been directed to contemplate in those verses our blessed Lord in a striking position both as to Himself and as to his disciples. You see in Him a wonderful display of grandeur, love, and condescending humility. You see in Him the majesty of Deity and the amiableness of sinless humanity : in the former there is no awful and overwhelming pomp, and in the latter there is no weakness or affectation. Perfection stamped his every thought, feeling, and action. We cannot possibly put before us a more glorious and delightful object

than our Saviour : and did we often, did we habitually, contemplate Him in the mirror of his word, what a powerful and beneficial influence would it have upon us ! But Christians as we are by name and profession, do not our consciences accuse us of living without a due remembrance of Christ ? Is it not a melancholy fact, that He engages but few of our thoughts ?

But mere remembrance, or mere contemplation, is far from being all that meets the demand of the gospel. Every discovery we have of Christ, all that is recorded of Him, every word and action of His, is intended not merely to furnish our minds with thoughts, but to influence our hearts, form our spirit, and regulate our conduct. To refer to what has been already said, Was Jesus serene in the trying hour ? Did He retain a warm and pure affection for his friends ? Did He manifest his humility by an act of the greatest condescension ? What, then, is our piety, if we are without noble thoughts and without composure in trying hours— if we are without an inextinguishable love to our Christian brethren—and if we are without that humility which would make us prompt to advance the good of others at the cost of our own comfort and convenience ?

Do we contemplate Jesus, and admire Him ? Do we profess the doctrines of his gospel, and perhaps boast of our knowledge of them, and of our tenacious adherence to them ? We wish you to test your piety not by these things, but by your conformity to Christ ; by the agreement that sub-

sists between His thoughts, spirit, and conduct, and your own. The saving knowledge of Christ has a transforming efficacy: and the question which we have to answer is not only, what we think of Him, but also, what the vital and practical influences are which, by virtue of our knowledge, exist and prevail within us, moulding our hearts and lives.

Duly consider this; and let your remembrance of what has been said to you, and also your own study of the text, lead you to serious and fervent prayer, that you may have that knowledge of Christ which, while it involves the sublimest views, is productive of that serene, affectionate, and humble spirit which you behold in Him, and which is essential to the true Christian character. Be it your daily study, therefore, to increase in the knowledge of Christ, and to grow in grace,—and especially in faith, hope, love, and humility.


SERMON II.

Spiritual Washing the Purification of the Soul.

ST. JOHN, xiii. 6—11.

Then cometh he to Simon Peter : and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet ? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit : and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him ; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

IN studying the language, declarations, and facts of Scripture, we never ought to be satisfied with vague and indistinct notions. In the remarkable transaction before us, the washing of the disciples' feet by our blessed Lord, (to be examined in this and in the following discourse,) the question which we have to determine is, What was the instruction which He intended to convey by it both to them and to his Church ? He might have adopted this striking measure merely to correct ambition and to



inculcate humility : and this moral lesson is perhaps all that meets the notice of the common reader of the sacred history. This was, indeed, a part of his design ; but it was only a part of it. The conduct of our Lord had a doctrinal as well as a moral import : and it leads us not only to consider humility and the imitation of our great Example, but also the spiritual blessings which we are to derive from Him as our Redeemer, and which are essential to our present and eternal happiness. The action simply viewed in itself might not justify this conclusion ; and yet a reflecting person might look upon it as one of a symbolical nature : but the language of our Lord is such as renders our conclusion manifest and certain. Unless we refer to the high and peculiar matters of Christianity, it would be difficult, or even impossible, to explain satisfactorily his strong assertion to Simon Peter, ‘ If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me.’ To have a part with Christ implies fellowship with Him in grace here, and the blessings involved in it, and also an inheritance with Him in glory hereafter, according to those words of St. Paul, ‘ And if children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.’ We cannot easily suppose that our Lord would have spoken in such solemn terms, if He had only referred to a common or social act of washing ; especially when we recollect that Peter was one of those who was ‘ clean,’ and therefore must have been the subject of a ‘ washing,’ in the spiritual sense of the word. In that declaration, ‘ And ye are clean, but not all,’ the word ‘ clean’

is undeniably used in a spiritual sense : and as being clean is the result of having been washed, the washing must have been of a spiritual nature. Less, therefore, cannot be said of the act of our Lord, than that it was a symbolical act,—indicating that spiritual washing by which the soul is cleansed from sin, and rendered fit to share everlasting glory with Him. We rest, therefore, in this—that the lowly act which He performed, not only taught Humility and Condescension, but also the deep lessons of Christian piety.

Proceeding, then, to investigate the subject of spiritual washing, as involving in it the purification of the soul from sin, we are to examine what the true spiritual washing is, and then to view it more minutely as a primary and a secondary matter ; for it is clearly laid down as such by our Lord himself in the verses under our consideration.

I. We consider what spiritual washing means : and on this point a few words will be sufficient.—Washing implies the existence of some species of soil or filth, and it expresses the act or means by which it is removed. If we refer to spiritual matters, we readily observe, that we express them by language which relates to visible and material things. If the soul be pure, holy, free from sin, we may say that it is clean ; and if it be polluted with sin, we may say that it is filthy : and, further, the process by which the defiled soul is made pure may be termed washing. This is describing things spiritual by things material : and this is common in Scripture. The term ‘washing’ is applied to the purifi-

cation of the soul in the sacred volume. We quote a few passages. 'Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.' 'And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God.' 'As Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.' 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' 'Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.' 'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.' 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'

We cannot doubt that in some of these passages of holy writ, the word 'washed' directly relates to Baptism, or alludes to it: but, on a general view of all of them, it is evident, that the word in Scripture is of wide interpretation, and describes, in short, the removal of sin from the true believer in all respects, and by all the means by which that removal is effected. It will, therefore, express the cleansing power and virtue both of the blood and of the Spirit of Christ. It comprehends both par-

don, justification, and the renewal of our nature in righteousness and true holiness. Where there is nothing in the argument or the context to limit its meaning, it may be regarded as comprehensive of all the purifying benefits that flow to us from Christ—from the redemption which we have in him. ‘Our Lord,’ to quote an able commentator, ‘treats in the first place of the washing of souls by the blood and Spirit of Christ,—by the blood, in the remission of sins, and by the Spirit, in regeneration: which washing so many typical baptisms or ablutions prefigured, and so many prophecies predicted that it was about to be accomplished in the reign of the Messiah. Of this washing Christ is the author, who by his obedience obtained it, and who applies it in his kingdom. Those who are made partakers of it ‘have part with Christ,’—have communion with his person and all his blessings, or the whole inheritance obtained by Him, and occupied by Him. They who are destitute of it are out of his communion, and have no participation of his blessings: for Christ can have no intimacy or fellowship with an impure being. His inheritance also is undefiled. Nor hath He been made flesh, and shed his blood in vain; which was done with no other object than that He might make his people by purification fit for the heavenly inheritance.’ [*Lampe.*]

The sum of all is this—God is righteous and holy,—Man is unrighteous and unholy,—and, therefore, Man, if he be to enjoy the glory and bliss of heaven, must be cleansed from sin; and the term

‘washing,’ in a general acceptation of it, describes that cleansing. To be washed is, then, in this spiritual view, to be made holy in the sight of God, whatever may be necessary to constitute that holiness.

II. We now proceed to consider this washing more minutely as a primary and secondary matter. This twofold view of the subject is suggested by the language of our Lord: for the expression ‘He that is washed,’ or hath been washed, describes something prior in order of time to what is spoken of in the subsequent expression, ‘needeth not save to wash his feet.’

1. Let us, then, reflect on the primary spiritual washing.—Our Lord appears to have spoken in these verses with an allusion to the eastern custom of bathing. The person who went into the bath would be altogether clean when he came out of it: but if he took a short excursion, there would be no need for him on his return to go into the bath as before: it would be sufficient for him to wash any soil which his feet had contracted, and he would then be accounted ‘clean every whit.’

With regard to our souls, we know that there is ‘a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness’ to all men of every age and country. The Lord Jesus Christ,—who ‘gave his life a ransom for many;’ who is ‘the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world;’ and ‘whose blood cleanseth from all sin;’—is that fountain: and to wash in the fountain of salvation, is to believe in Him with a living and true faith.

Thus we are made spiritually and effectually, partakers of Him, and therefore of all the blessings of that redemption which He hath wrought out for us; or we may say in other words, that we are justified and sanctified. If we consider the state and character of man as a descendant of fallen Adam, we must admit that he is a corrupt, transgressing, and guilty creature; and he needs, as such, the renewal of his nature, the pardon of his sins, and the justification of his person in the sight of God. If any of us examine ourselves in the light of divine truth, and do not suffer ourselves to be cheated by falsehood and flattery, we must acknowledge that we have broken the law of God in countless instances; and are therefore condemned by it; and, further, that our hearts are evil, full of worldliness and of various unholy desires and affections. We are earthly, polluted, and rebellious creatures. When we rightly feel that this is our case, and are led to consider the Justice or Righteousness of God as a Moral Governor, and also his Holiness as a Being in whom is 'no darkness at all,' we shall discover, at the apprehension of his justice and holiness, and of our own guilt and defilement, the absolute necessity of the blessings of Justification and Sanctification, by which we are washed,—by which sin is removed in whatever way it affects us, and all that constitutes safety, glory, and happiness is conferred upon the soul, or wrought in it. A righteous or just God cannot look with approbation on a rebellious and guilty creature, and a holy God cannot look with delight on a polluted creature:

such a creature must be washed, must be justified and sanctified, before he is pleasing to God, and fit for the society of the spirits of just men made perfect.

With regard to Justification, we observe—‘that God’s justifying solely, or chiefly, doth import his acquitting us from guilt, condemnation, and punishment, by free pardon and remission of our sins, accounting us and dealing with us as just persons. upright and innocent in his sight and esteem.’ [*Dr. Barrow.*] With regard to Sanctification, we observe that it is—the ‘putting off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and the being renewed in the spirit of our mind; and the putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.’

‘The heavenly state doth depend upon two things, the grace of Justification and spiritual Renovation, and these two things are fundamental and principal to the state of religion; the two great things of which religion doth consist. The grace of Justification whereby we who were guilty and obnoxious are discharged of guilt, and put into a good state with God, have our sins pardoned, our persons accepted and restored to grace and favour: this by the state of Justification. Then for spiritual Renovation, that is necessary for the exercise and practice of virtue and goodness, and the doing the works of holiness. Now this latter is in us by way of Habit, and of internal disposition. By Justification we are assumed to a Right and Title to hea-

ven, and the heavenly inheritance; and through Sanctification we come to employ ourselves in divine and heavenly matters, and to frame ourselves in some degree to the business of the future life; especially discharged from the pollutions and defilements of this sinful world. Now in this complex state (I call it complex because it consists of both,) that which I call the state of religion doth fundamentally depend upon these two,—this complex state consisting of both of these. In this state we have freedom with God, we have inward strength, we are restored to the use and liberty of our faculties, and we are put into a capacity to act: neither of which is to be found in the state of guilt and sin. In the state of guilt, the sinner is in danger, liable to punishment: and he is in a contradiction to the nature of God,—to the unchangeable rules of everlasting righteousness, goodness, and truth: for the weight of sin pulls down, and is in tendency to hell: but holiness and purity of spirit are the necessary qualifications for our admission into the heavenly kingdom, and of our stay and continuance therein.' [*Dr. Whichcote.*]

The primary spiritual washing, therefore, without which we are not clean, comprehends our justification and sanctification; or the removal of sin freely by the mercy and grace of God in Christ Jesus, and the removal of sin as a defiling principle by the implantation of a principle of life and holiness in the soul. As to the time when we become partakers of this washing, we only observe—that it is when we repent, believe, and are made partakers

of Christ. Whatever inestimable blessings are conveyed to us by Baptism, if we have spent several years in the service of the world and sin, we have violated the covenant and forfeited its blessings. For surely a person who is walking according to the vanity of his mind and heart, cannot presume to say, that he is, in a spiritual view, 'a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.' When we look on careless Christians, we can only say, that you are washed, to the salvation of your souls, when you are brought, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, to 'Repentance toward God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.' When you receive Christ as your Saviour and your Lord, when He is your hope and peace, and the Holy Spirit is your life and strength; then you are pardoned, justified, and sanctified;—you are washed; for Christ has washed you, and your part is with Him. The kingdom of God's grace is within you, and the kingdom of his glory lies before you as the object of your undeceiving hope.—But let us consider,

2. The secondary spiritual washing. 'He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet.' A person, as already observed, who has been in a bath, finds it proper to wash his feet, and perhaps frequently, when there is no need of an universal ablution. In like manner, the believing soul, who, as such, has washed in the fountain of salvation, and been made clean, finds it absolutely necessary to be often looking unto Jesus, in the exercise of especial acts of faith, for the removal of that

defilement which it is daily contracting, more or less, in a sinful body and in an evil world, and also for the more complete eradication of inherent depravity by the might of imparted grace.

By the word 'washing' in the verse that we are now examining, the same thing is to be understood as in the eighth verse,—'the baptism or washing of the blood and of the Spirit of Christ. He who has been thus washed is pronounced altogether pure. By the washing of blood, in the remission of sins, the perfect righteousness of Christ is given to the soul, which covers all sins, and gives a plenary right to salvation. And although in Baptism the beginnings of the Spirit may often be small and feeble, nevertheless, he who feels them in himself is already in a certain respect altogether pure; because the whole power of sin is broken, so that no vice remains which the faithful person does not hate and oppose, and because the power of regeneration pervades all the parts and faculties of the man, and makes him a new man, sound and perfect, although an infant and weak.' [*Lampe.*]


We would carefully abstain from any thing either questionable or controversial. It were well, and far better, we think, if divines employed themselves in illustrating and enforcing the plain and essential matters of religion, instead of occasioning debate, perplexity, confusion, and division by attempting to explain what cannot be explained, and to decide what cannot be decided. Of the divinely instituted Sacrament of Baptism we cannot think too highly; but at the same time we cannot speak of

it too modestly : for, let us frame what hypothesis we choose, there rests upon it a shade which our feeble vision cannot penetrate ; and elaborate reasonings about it are, in general, more calculated to display learning and ingenuity, than to promote edification. The deplorable point, however, is not our ignorance, but our neglect : and we shall probably know more of the virtue of Baptism, when Christians attend far more faithfully than is the case at present to the duties involved in that holy ordinance.

As to the universality of purification which we ascribe to the term washing, it is necessary for us to explain in what manner we use the term. If we limit it to pardon and justification, we maintain that this washing is complete : for a half pardon, or a half justification, would be equivalent to no pardon, no justification : indeed the expressions are contradictory and absurd. But it does not follow, from our being pardoned, that we shall sin no more : and if we sin, and incur fresh guilt, we stand in need of renewed pardon,—of what we have called the secondary washing.—But if by ‘washing’ we understand Sanctification, our statement must be modified according to the different nature of the subject. The acts of mercy are instantaneously complete acts ; but the operations of gracious power are not at once entire, but effect their purpose progressively. The seeds of universal holiness may be planted within us, and yet we may not at once be completely holy. Our views both of God and of his law, and of our own hearts

and lives, are very defective, if we do not see and feel that we are at all times sinful and imperfect creatures, as to the inward workings of the heart, as well as to our outward conduct. When the power of the divine life puts forth a prevailing energy and activity; when, as penitents and believers, we are acquainted with the gospel, submit to it, and rejoice in it; we are far from being complete in holiness: and hence the admonition of Scripture is, that we should 'cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.' Here also, then, we see our need of what we have called the secondary washing.

'If we say that we have fellowship with God, and walk in darkness, we lie. And yet in the next verse, though we do walk in the light, yet is there need of the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse us from all sin: and so throughout the Scriptures. All the integrity of the godly under the law, did not exempt them from offering sacrifice, which was the expiation of sin in the figure, looking forward to that great and spotless sacrifice that was to be slain for the sins of the world. And those who believe the gospel, the application of that justifying blood that streams forth in the doctrine of the gospel, is not only needful to wash in for their cleansing in their first conversion, but is to be reapplied to the soul, for taking off the daily contracted guiltiness of new sins. It is a fountain opened, and standing open, for sin and for uncleanness, as that sea of brass before the sanctuary. They that are clean have still



need of washing, at least, their feet, as Christ speaks to Peter. Because of the woful continuance of sin in the godly, while they continue in this region of sin and death, therefore is there a continual necessity of new recourse to this great expiation.' [*Archbishop Leighton.*]

We might justly advance a similar statement with regard to the necessity of fresh supplies of divine grace for the attainment of more exalted degrees of holiness. That the state of Christians, as to vital godliness, is exceedingly various, is readily admitted: but who, even among the most conspicuous in piety, does not daily need the forgiveness of sins, and additional holiness? Some stain is too frequently incurred; some corruption within requires to be mortified: and though, as having been 'washed,' there is a view in which we are 'clean;' yet if we would be 'clean every whit,' we must daily look to the blood that cleanseth from all sin, and daily seek that divine influence which destroys all sin.

It appears, then, that our blessed Saviour, if our view of the transaction which we are considering be correct, gave his disciples and the Church an emblematical view of the redemption which we have in Him, and of its application to the soul. He taught, in fact, what all men are to seek and obtain from Him here, if they would have their part with Him hereafter. The sum of all is this; We are washed and make partakers of Christ when we truly repent and believe; but in consequence of our daily transgressions, and of our remaining

corruption, we are always to look unto Jesus for fresh pardon and for larger measures of the sanctifying influences of his Spirit.

Thus while the disciples were cherishing many worldly views and expectations, our Lord put before them, in a singular but striking manner, the great blessings of his kingdom. He taught them that secular power, pomp, and honour were not to be thought of by his followers; and that what they were to seek, and what they would obtain, was the removal of sin, and the adornment of the soul in righteousness and holiness. And as his kingdom is always the same, we also are taught, as clearly as the disciples were, how we are to regard Him, and what blessings we are to seek from Him.—In conclusion, we offer a few observations.

1. We ought to be unfeignedly thankful for the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. We in ourselves are lost and perishing creatures, covered with defilement, and loaded with guilt: but we have a Saviour whose blood and righteousness and grace remove guilt and sin; so that if we truly believe in Him there is reconciliation and amity between God and us, we rejoice in the divine favour, and look forward to eternal blessedness. And shall not the view of such mercy and grace fill our souls with the most lively gratitude, and make us adopt the language of Saint Paul? ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ.’

2. We ought to be careful in forming correct views of true spiritual piety. It essentially consists


in the participation of Christ. It is the washing of the soul by the blood and Spirit of our Saviour; so that we are no longer guilty creatures before God, and no longer those depraved creatures who are under the dominion of sin, but sanctified creatures, continually watching and warring against sin. Pardon and Justification are not substitutes for inherent purity: and our lives are never so perfect, our hearts never so holy upon earth, as not to render renewed pardon and greater holiness essential. Thus a truly pious life is one that is led 'by the faith of the Son of God;'—by faith in Him as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

3. We should beware of seeking elsewhere what can be obtained from Christ only. His words are explicit; 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me;' and this He, in fact, says to every one of us. How, then, can we think of any thing in ourselves, or done by ourselves, as in any way, or in any measure, competent to remove sin, and to procure for us the divine favour? Salvation is of grace: it is in Christ,—in Him only and wholly; so that we are believing recipients of it, and in no sense whatever, in no degree whatever, meritorious workers of it. We may account Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel: but the counsel of God shall stand: the mandate is gone forth, 'Wash in Jordan seven times, and thou shalt be clean:' and disobedience to it is confusion and everlasting misery.

4. Every one ought to seek without delay the blessings which are offered to him in the gospel.

Banish indifference from your breasts, and cherish no longer a vain confidence. Approach the gracious Saviour with humble and devout, with contrite and believing hearts; and He will wash your souls from the guilt and defilement of sin, and clothe you with the garments of salvation. O why refuse, why hesitate any longer, to seek that washing in the blood and by the Spirit of Christ, which will restore them to beauty and health, and fit them for the state of perfect and eternal purity. O cleave not to the world; cleave not to your sins and pleasures; cleave not to your errors and delusions; but seek a spiritual effectual knowledge of Him who is 'like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's sope.'

5. Those who, through grace, know Christ in the light of truth and in the exercise and effects of a living faith, should remember what they yet are,—oft-offending and partially renewed creatures,—their consequent need perpetually of Christ's blessings,—and act accordingly. The greatest of believers is yet a sinner upon earth. Often, therefore, not to say continually, must the eye of faith be directed to the great Redeemer and Intercessor, and incessant prayers must ascend to the Father of mercies, that daily sins may be blotted out, and that the work of holiness may be carried on in the soul by the prevailing grace of the Holy Spirit. Thus only can we meditate with delight on those words, 'clean every whit,' and feel the consolation and hope which they will impart when we have solid ground for the persuasion that they describe ourselves.



SERMON III.

Humility inculcated.

ST. JOHN, xiii. 12—17.

So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you ? Ye call me Master and Lord : and ye say well ; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord ; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

ST. LUKE informs us, chap. xxii. 24, that there had been a contention among the disciples respecting priority. ‘ And there was also a strife among them which of them should be accounted greatest.’ This dispute is supposed to have taken place during the interval between the beginning of the supper and the serving up of the paschal lamb ; and also to have been occasioned by those words of our blessed Lord, ‘ I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.’ If we

consider their defective views and wrong spirit, we shall readily admit that the measure which our Lord adopted was exceedingly appropriate; well fitted to correct their errors respecting the nature of his kingdom, to repress their worldliness and ambition, and to teach them the necessity of cultivating a deep, unfeigned, and practical Humility. He washed their feet; and when He resumed his place, He asserted his own dignity, proposed Himself as an Example for their imitation, and inculcated the necessity of making their practice to correspond with their knowledge.

I. We observe, then, that it is our duty to form and entertain the most elevated views of our Lord Jesus Christ. ‘Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.’

The disciples, it appears, had not failed in using the most respectful language, and in maintaining the most proper behaviour, towards our blessed Lord. They knew that He was an extraordinary character; and they looked up to Him with veneration, submission, and delight, as one whose instructions were to be received, and whose commands were to be obeyed. He now informed them that they had acted rightly, and assured them that He was both Master and Lord—entitled to their reverential homage. He spoke in general but little to them of his own character and claims,—directing their attention rather to his doctrines and works than to Himself. But on this occasion He avowed his character, and asserted his rights. He was Master and Lord in a sense and manner in

which no created being could be;—a Master or Teacher whose instructions were Truth; a Lord whose Authority and Power were supreme.

We may reflect on the humble appearance which Jesus assumed while dwelling among men; without the splendour of heavenly glory, and without the magnificence of earthly pomp. We view Him amidst toil and wandering, in sorrow, want, and weariness, and the subject of opposition and obloquy. But in that lowly person, despised and rejected of men, we recognise the Son of God, the Maker and Upholder of the world. Knowing the gracious purpose of God in the redemption of mankind, we understand the person and perfection of Emmanuel,—who and what He is: and fully persuaded that He has ‘a Name which is above every name,’ we gladly own that He is Master and Lord; the Prophet of his Church, and the universal Sovereign.

Our conceptions of the person and dignity of Christ ought to be most exalted, for no others are just. But we should also remember, that the most elevated view and correct confession of his greatness and goodness will, as to our salvation, be of no avail, if we rest in them only. Our acknowledgment of Him, to be saving, must be made with the convictions of awakened, enlivened, and grateful hearts: indeed ‘no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.’ While some would degrade our Lord, and while others make only a heartless avowal of Him, we maintain that the true and effectual confession of Him is that

which is enlightened, spiritual, and practical. If our apprehensions of his dignity and authority are just, we shall render to Him a willing, universal, and never-ceasing allegiance. Is He our Master, or Teacher? Then we shall receive his instructions as the light of our souls, to the utter exclusion of our own vain opinions. In vain do we call Him Master, if we retain our own false notions, and the errors and maxims of a mistaken world. Is He our Lord? Then we shall revere Him, demean ourselves as his loyal subjects, and carefully keep his commandments. He is the true Christian who renounces his errors and his sins; who receives the gospel and obeys its laws. To no saving purpose do we admit that Christ is the light of the world, if we yet remain in darkness: and to no saving purpose do we own that He is Lord, if we suffer other lords to have dominion over us.

We would thus lead you to adopt and maintain the highest ideas of our blessed Redeemer as Master and Lord;—the highest ideas of his person, dignity, offices, and claims: for such as your views of Him are, such will your piety be. If your views of the Lord Jesus Christ are dim, and if your thoughts of Him are low, your affections towards Him will be feeble and cold; and the divine life within you, supposing you possess any measure of it, will be dull and languishing, and your practical holiness will be very defective. Who abounds in faith, love, hope, and all holy conversation, but he who habitually looks unto Jesus as Master and Lord with adoring reverence and joy?

II. We observe, further, that it is our duty to imitate our blessed Lord in his Humility and Condescension. 'If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet : for I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.'

It was a striking spectacle to see the Lord Jesus performing the office of the lowest servant. He who had received the testimony that He was the Son of God, who had taught the sublimest doctrines, wrought the most stupendous miracles, and shone with the brightest lustre on the mount of transfiguration, condescended to wash the feet of his attendants. In this action He shadowed forth, as we have seen, the great blessings of redemption, and also inculcated, which is our subject at present, one of the most important virtues of his kingdom. He condemned by this action the pride and ambition of his immediate followers, and taught them humility and condescension. Faithful to Him as they were, yet their views were, to a considerable extent, of a worldly nature : and their spirit was at variance with the instructions which they had frequently received, and with the example which had been long set before them. Much of the leaven of our corrupt nature wrought in them, blinding, in no small measure, their understandings. They cherished some of the prejudices of their countrymen respecting the kingdom of the Messiah ; looking forward with eagerness to the establishment of an empire which, whatever were its religious character, would be connected with secular honour,

pomp, and power. Their debates about personal pre-eminence under the new administration had not been infrequent: the expedient, therefore, which our Lord adopted, with his remarks upon it, was well suited to correct their mistake, to show the folly of pride, and to teach them that the deepest humility formed an essential part of the true Christian spirit. He might have expatiated on various topics, and enforced the cultivation of this virtue by cogent arguments: but the method which He selected was the most convincing that we can easily conceive. He called in the senses to the aid of reflection, and compelled them to see and feel, by the lowly service which He performed, that the spirit of his kingdom is not the spirit of human nature, or of the world; that real elevation does not consist in secular superiority, and that the brightest lustre in which his followers can shine is not derived from outward pageantry, but from the exhibition of that mild virtue which a haughty world may treat with contempt. Such an action must have made a strong impression upon their hearts; and it must have been always remembered by them with feelings of the deepest interest, when they understood rightly the nature of his gospel.

It is obvious that these words of our Lord, ‘Ye also ought to wash one another’s feet,’ are to be understood in the spirit of them, and not in the mere letter. He in effect said, that He was humble Himself, and that He required his followers to be humble,—always ready to perform the duties of kindness, humanity, and condescension. He thus

unfolded the spirit of the gospel in one of its leading branches, and laid the axe to the root of human pride. Could the disciples possibly ever forget the lowly attitude in which they had seen their divine Master? Could they ever think any office too low, when they recollected his emphatical declaration, 'I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you?'

But this transaction is recorded for our instruction: and surely no Christian can ever meditate seriously upon it without readily admitting, that the cultivation and exhibition of an humble frame of mind is one of the great practical requirements of our holy faith. Human nature is always substantially the same; and its spirit may be seen in that of the mistaken disciples. We are naturally proud, ambitious, and fond of authority; and are apt to consider greatness as consisting in worldly dignity, power, and splendour. But the gospel also is always the same; and it teaches us to be humble, to deny ourselves, to esteem others, and to promote their welfare. He, therefore, that would be a true follower of Christ, must renounce the haughty workings of his heart, war against them, and triumph over them: for unless deep and unfeigned humility be wrought in us, we have the clearest evidence that we have not the Spirit of Christ, and that we are none of His. No such a character as a proud Christian can exist; for he who is proud does not belong to the lowly Saviour.

True Humility is an essential virtue in the Christian character. It is planted in the heart at the

commencement of a religious life : it accompanies us in every stage of our pilgrimage—to the last moment of our earthly existence : and then it abides with us for ever amid the glories and the joys of heaven. Without an humble frame of mind the gospel cannot be rightly received at first ; or afterwards rightly improved. He who is under the prevailing influence of pride cannot be a true subject of Christ's kingdom : and with regard to real Christians, any measure of this unholy ingredient forms a most debasing alloy in whatever bosom it is found. To be a true Christian is to be cast into the mould of the gospel : it is, therefore, to be humble before God in the cherished frame of our souls, under a due sense of our depravity, sin, and imperfection, and of our entire dependence on his mercy, grace, and goodness : it is also to be humble in our demeanour towards our fellow creatures. Humility is, as it were, to be cast over us as the pleasing veil through which the other graces of the Christian character are to shine forth in their beauty and loveliness.

It is, indeed, easy to praise humility and to condemn pride ; for such eulogy and such invective require little exertion and no sacrifice. But the humility which our Lord inculcates is a sound practical principle, which, while it gives a peculiar frame to the inner man, is productive of proper conduct. Such humility He Himself exhibited ; and such He requires to be in his faithful followers.

But our Lord enforces Humility on the ground

of propriety, as well as by a reference to his own example. 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord, neither is he that is sent greater than he that sent him.' A servant or a messenger does not properly claim equal honour with his employer ; much less, greater. If the superior manifest an humble mind, or submit to the performance of lowly offices, can the inferior hesitate to exhibit the same spirit, or to engage in similar services ?

The ministers of the gospel are the messengers of Christ : all its disciples are his servants : and when they view their exalted character and relations, surely they cannot forget the laws, spirit, and example of their divine Master. He put himself in the lowest place ; and shall they be ambitious of the highest ? He was humble and meek ; and shall they be proud and austere ? He laboured for the benefit of others ; and shall they consult only or primarily their own gratification ? This would be to act most inconsistently. Wishing to obtain 'the honour that cometh from God only,' it ill becomes them to speak and act as if they most highly esteemed the honour which is conferred by men. Their spirit and conduct are not to be those of the world. The spirit of the gospel is humble, but at the same time it is exalted and heavenly : and such must be the cherished spirit of its disciples. While the gospel enjoins what may be called our great duties, it equally inculcates those which we may think to be of a lower order : and if we account the

performance of the unassuming and unostentatious works of humanity and condescension beneath our notice, our notions of evangelical morality must be very defective. But,

III. It is our duty to reduce our knowledge to practice. 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.'—The wide distance that subsists between our speculative views and real attainments in piety, is a subject of painful and humiliating meditation. Our knowledge may be extensive and exact, while we greatly fail in practical consistency. A specious profession is easily made under the combined influence of clear notions, animated feelings, and vivid imagination: but if, in the midst of this, we solemnly ask ourselves what we are before God, our fervour will be quenched and our eloquence silenced. It is of great moment that we maintain within us a just conviction of the vast difference that exists between what we know and what we are. If we rightly improve it, we shall be humble and penitent, ashamed of ourselves, and less censorious towards others. And further; we shall be stimulated to prayer, watchfulness, and diligence, that there may be a growing conformity between our Christian profession and our daily conduct. Every truth of Scripture which we know, ought to exercise a powerful influence on our hearts and conduct: and if it do not, we subject ourselves to the punishment due to our unfaithfulness; for 'that servant who knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.'

We see, then, what our duty is ; namely, to seek divine grace, and reduce our knowledge to practice. For instance, we know that we ought to be humble ; let us banish pride far from us. We know that we ought to be prompt and laborious in doing good ; let us not indulge ourselves in sloth and inactivity. We know that the blessed Jesus is our Lord and Master : let us not listen to other masters, obey other lords, or follow other examples. While the gospel gives us the light of its discoveries, and the directions of its precepts, let us not walk as if we were left in darkness and without a guide. If we do not faithfully strive to act according to our knowledge, our reason and conscience must condemn us as those who set at nought the authority of God, despise his goodness, and wilfully expose ourselves to the consequences of his righteous displeasure.

We are apt to boast of our knowledge, and to account ourselves superior to others if we excel them in that respect. But knowledge in itself is merely mental light, giving a discovery of things, but leaving them precisely as they are. It may furnish us with notions and talk : but it is valuable only when it is effectual : and it is effectual only when it leads us to seek the blessings which it reveals, to avoid the evils which it condemns, and to cultivate and exhibit the excellence, spiritual and practical, which it inculcates. He is the happy man, not who knows, but who acts according to his knowledge ; who, professing Christ, is truly a follower of Christ. ‘ If ye know these things, hap-

py are ye if ye do them.' Surely this single declaration of our Lord must put to silence, and cover with confusion, the indolent and the inconsistent professors of the gospel. At the same time it shows, that sound, vital, and practical piety is that which constitutes the happiness of human beings. True religion is the light, life, and blessedness of man : but if we would find it, in our own experience, to be such, we must so receive the gospel, by divine grace, as that it really shall be, and that more and more, the purifier of our hearts and the rule of our conduct.

We conclude with the language of exhortation.

1. Acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as he is revealed to you in Scripture. This lies at the foundation of true Christian piety ; and it may, indeed, be said to form the sum and substance of it. Some may err 'through philosophy and vain deceit,' and endeavour to degrade the person of our Lord : but a dull and unreflecting indifference to religion may be regarded as the prevailing evil. Careless about the salvation of their souls, men will not 'search the Scriptures,' but spend their days in reckless ignorance, unable to give any proper account of their hopes and prospects. Banish, we beseech you, this fatal indifference far from you, and learn the true lessons of piety. Jesus is the light of the world—the Prophet of his Church : and He is 'King on the holy hill of Zion.' Be not satisfied with frigidly admitting that He is Master and Lord, but receive his doctrines and submit to his authority. Hear Him, revere Him, confide in Him, love

Him, and obey Him. Daily pray for the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit, that you may savingly know Christ, and follow Him in holy living, that it may be well with you here and in the world to come.

2. Learn the necessity and excellence of true Humility. Our blessed Saviour was humble: and as the real excellence of his followers consists in their conformity to Him, humility must form a part of their excellence. Pride is most displeasing to God, and most injurious to the soul: and as such it is to be abhorred, lamented, and renounced, The unrenewed are under its prevailing influence: but it works also in various measures in the hearts of the best men: and he who claims a total exemption from it, only proves the defectiveness of his self-knowledge. Pride accompanies us wherever we go: it is felt in our spirit, heard in our language, and seen in our actions. It diminishes the value of many of our best duties. Let the true Christian detect the foe in all his workings and windings, and expel him from his bosom: or, to change the image, let him, in the strength of divine grace, tear every fibre of the poison-plant out of his heart. By serious meditation and persevering prayer, let him strive to maintain a humble frame of spirit. Let him habitually demean himself towards God as a sinner whose trust is in Christ only; and towards his fellow creatures, as one who is truly desirous of imitating his Lord and Master. Here is your duty; and here also is your excellence, happiness, and honour.

3. Let your conduct correspond as much as possible with your knowledge. The more you know, the better persons you ought to be. Happiness is that which all men wish to obtain, and that which they are continually seeking in a thousand ways: but Religion is the only source of real happiness. If, however, we would enjoy that true peace and satisfaction in which genuine happiness consists, and if we would be useful in our day, and adorn our holy cause, we must be practical Christians; not only knowing our duty, but doing our duty; not only confiding in mercy, but obeying the command; true to the doctrine and true to the precept, ‘Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.’ There was a perfect agreement between his instructions and his conduct. His words were truth; His spirit was love, meekness, compassion, and humility; His practical life was rectitude itself. You may speak of your lack of knowledge, as though that lack were a valid excuse for your careless and worldly and sinful lives: but be not deceived: such is not the case: for, however ignorant you may be, you have reason, you have conscience, and you have some knowledge of divine things. See, then, where your guilt lies. It lies in these two things;—that you do not act according to the knowledge you possess; and that you do not seek more knowledge, and act still better. How inconsistent are you, and consequently how miserable! You know what is good, and yet pursue what is evil: and daily misery,—for there is no peace to the wicked,—is

the fruit of your daily perverseness. Pray, therefore, for a right understanding in all things, and for ability to act in correspondence with your light and convictions.—Nor let the serious Christian ever forget the necessity of maintaining right conduct. To him we say but one word,—He who thinks as a Christian must also act as a Christian ; and if he do not, he has far more occasion to tremble than to rejoice.

SERMON IV.

*The Disciples confirmed and comforted, and the
Betrayal announced.*

ST. JOHN, xiii. 18, 19, 20, 21.

*I speak not of you all ; I know whom I have chosen :
but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that
eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against
me. Now I tell you before it come, that when it is
come to pass, ye may believe that I am he. Verily,
verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whom-
soever I send, receiveth me ; and he that receiveth
me, receiveth him that sent me. When Jesus had
thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified,
and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one
of you shall betray me.*

OUR blessed Lord had said to his disciples, ver. 10th, ‘ And ye are clean, but not all : ’ and the Evangelist adds, ‘ For he knew who should betray him ; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. ’ In the verses which are to be considered at present, our Lord resumes the topic with which the tenth verse concludes. He had painful information to advance ; and He prepares the minds of the eleven for hearing it, by remarks which were calculated to obviate any prejudice, to confirm them in the faith, and to comfort their hearts. He was an ex-

ample of prudence and kindness, as well as of faithfulness.—Without any further remarks, we consider,

I. The principal truths contained in these verses.

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is omniscient. ‘I speak not of you all : I know whom I have chosen’—that is, to be Apostles. The eleven disciples, we presume, had no suspicion that there was an unsound heart in their little fraternity. The twelve had heard the same instructions, witnessed the same miracles, and made the same profession of attachment to their Lord and Master. They had associated together in friendly intercourse : and how could they entertain an unfavourable opinion of any one of their number ? Man knows but little of man. The language, profession, and conduct of a person may be unobjectionable for a season ; and yet his heart may be the abode of corrupt principles and affections. But could Judas suppose that our Lord was ignorant of his real character ? Had Satan so blinded him, as to make him think that his hypocrisy and iniquity were undetected, and formed an awful secret of which he himself only was conscious ?—But let each of us duly consider, that as our Lord knew the heart of Judas, so He knows the hearts of all men. It is expressly declared, that ‘He needed not that any should testify of man ; for he knew what was in man :’ and his intimate acquaintance with things unseen by the human eye, is exemplified in the history before us. The artifices of Satan, and the thoughts of the miserable Judas, were open to his view. And

we may apply this fact to ourselves, for comfort, or for warning. Are we clean-washed, justified, and sanctified—faithful in heart? Then we are known and approved by our Lord. But, on the contrary, are we unclean—deceiving others, and even ourselves, by a fair profession of religion, while sin rules within us? Then also we are known by our Lord, but we are disapproved by Him; and we wretchedly deceive ourselves if we think that we escape his observation, or that we are the objects of his favourable regard. Omniscience is an attribute which belongs to Him: He rules on the throne of glory, but yet He is always present to every one of us, and sees both the state and operations of all hearts.

And what are the practical uses to be made of this truth? Let the ungodly consider it, renounce their errors, repent of their sins, abandon every evil way, and earnestly seek the divine mercy and grace. Let the careless professor of religion consider it, see the utter uselessness of fine notions and plausible appearances, and seek true and efficient piety. Let the pious consider it, and study with unceasing vigilance to approve themselves more and more to Him who searcheth the heart, and requireth truth in the inward parts.

Many things in the world, in the Church, and in themselves, may be causes of fear and despondency to the pious: but as nothing happened to our Lord but what was according to the will of God, and nothing but what He himself foresaw, so nothing happens in the world, in the Church, or to the in-

dividual, but what is a part of the divine dispensation, and what is open to the view of our living Head. There is a counsel which plans all, a knowledge that extends to all, and a power which controls all : and a full persuasion of this ought to be settled in our minds : for it will dispel our fears and calm our spirits in the darkest days—in the most trying seasons. But, further, knowing that He who sees the hearts, as well as the conduct, of his faithful servants, will reward their holy purposes and their righteous deeds, how careful ought they to be to walk before Him in purity of heart, in simplicity and godly sincerity! How can they indulge in vain imaginations and corrupt affections, when they consider that the eye of Him who is to be their Judge is always upon them!

2. In the case of Judas the Scripture was accomplished. ‘ But that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.’ That is, He who was in habits of the greatest intimacy with me, has acted towards me like the perfidious animal that kicks his feeder. Our Lord refers to Ps. xli. 9, where David, a type of Christ, speaks of his own distresses. After mentioning the conduct of his enemies, he observes, ‘ Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.’ This friend was Ahithophel, whom we may regard as a type of Judas. As the Jewish king was treated in a treacherous manner by a Ahithophel, so was our Lord treated by a Judas : and thus our redemption, and

the history of our Redeemer, was shadowed forth in various ways, not only in its general outline, but even in its minute circumstances, to the ancient Church. The betraying of the Lord Jesus by a faithless disciple was not merely an event that was brought to pass by the device and malice of the Jews, but it was one that had been fore-ordained, foreseen, and prefigured by a striking occurrence in the life of David : and our Lord, by referring to this prediction, led his disciples to reflect upon the fact, that every thing which befell Him was according to the counsel of God and the delineations of prophecy : and consequently their faith in Him would be confirmed.

We are apt to confine our attention to human counsels and to visible agents ; to the present hour, and to the troubled and shifting scene before us. But our Lord, by referring to type and prediction, teaches us to correct and enlarge our views, and to acknowledge in all events the fulfilment of the divine purposes. He leads us to repose upon the word of truth, and to recognise the divine will and the divine power in the transactions and events that take place on the theatre of this world. We only see the counsels, passions, and proceedings of human beings : but if we look into the Scriptures with believing minds, we shall acknowledge, in all we see and hear, the will and working of the Supreme Ruler : and this will give elevation to our thoughts, and composure and serenity to our feelings.

3. The faith which our Lord requires of his fol-

lowers is a principle founded in knowledge. It is not a blind and undefinable feeling, but a principle which we can describe and defend. ‘ Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he’—the true Messiah, and thus proceed cheerfully in my service. To believe that Christ is the true Messiah, is one thing ; but to believe in him as the true Messiah to our salvation, is another thing : we are competent to arrive at the former by the investigation of evidence, as intelligent creatures ; but we are not competent to arrive at the latter by any inherent power of our own : it results from a divine influence on our souls. The former, the faith of testimony, may exist without the latter, the spiritual and saving faith : but the latter cannot subsist without some measures of the former ; for how can we trust in Christ without knowing Him, and his claims to our full and entire confidence ?

Our Lord was careful to establish the faith of the disciples in Him as the Messiah on clear and solid ground. He proved his omnipotence by his miracles ; his omniscience, by unveiling the thoughts of the heart ; and his being the promised Deliverer, by referring to types and predictions. He regarded his disciples as men who could investigate his claims,—comparing what they saw and heard with what they read in the Old Testament, judging of evidence, and forming conclusions accordingly. Thus their faith would not be a mere feeling, or prejudice, or assumption, but the clear and strong conviction of the enlightened mind,—a principle

for which solid reasons could be readily assigned : they would have the purest satisfaction in themselves, and also be able to confute error and establish truth, not only with animated affections, but with wisdom and argument.

And thus our faith ought to result from reflection and inquiry ; for without these we cannot be intelligent believers. If we would have ‘ a reason for the hope ’ that is in us, we must ‘ search the Scriptures,’ compare prophecy and fulfilment, type and antitype, shadow and substance ; and we must see in the light of knowledge that the Lord Jesus Christ is the promised Redeemer.

The manner in which our Lord treated his disciples is a manifest condemnation of that ignorant faith which is only a blind and passive acquiescence in truth,—which is only, in fact, a local or accidental prejudice. Yet it is to be feared, that very many Christians have no other faith than this. How few believe in Christ from having studied the Bible—from knowing and seeing that He is the Son of God and the Saviour of men, since He taught, and acted, and suffered as it was foretold that He should teach, act, and suffer ! Most believe because others before them have believed, and because those around them believe : but such conduct is unworthy of men as reasonable beings. ‘ Without faith it is impossible to please God : ’ and without knowledge it is impossible to have faith—faith without knowledge being a mere idle fancy.

It is one step in religion to confess Christ to be the Messiah, from the conviction of the enlightened

mind. Then the dull and dark region of an unreflecting ignorance is abandoned : but we are not to rest here : and we repeat what we have already said, that the faith of testimony and the faith of the Spirit are widely distinct things. Had the disciples only possessed the former, what a meagre and inefficient thing would their preaching have been ! But they believed with the heart : the divine and spiritual faith was wrought in them : they knew the mercy and grace of the gospel, and they preached it triumphantly to the world as the doctrine of light, life, and transforming energy. And thus too, if we rest in the faith of testimony our profession of religion will be speculative, formal, and dead : but if we seek, in addition to this, and obtain the faith of the Spirit, we shall enjoy the peculiar blessings of Messiah's kingdom. By the faith of testimony we admit that Christ is the light, and life, and hope, and peace of the world : but by the faith of the Spirit, He is the light, and life, and hope, and peace of our own souls.

Thus we call upon you to abandon the faith of ignorance, (which in fact is not faith,) and to seek a faith grounded in knowledge : but we go further, and we would urge you to seek that faith also which is the true acknowledgment of Christ ; which implies that you behold Him in the light of his word, and experience the virtues of his Cross and of his Spirit. We wish you to have a faith which you can defend by argument, and the inward operations of which you can also delineate from your own experience.

4. The ministers of the gospel are to be highly esteemed. ‘ Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me ; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.’ This assurance might have been given at this time by our Lord to his disciples to comfort and animate them, by suggesting a lofty idea of the dignity belonging to their office and labours. If, when his ambassadors, they were rejected by many, yet they would be received by others, who would derive the greatest blessings from their instructions ; and they themselves would be partakers of the greatest satisfaction, whatever their trials might be. By advert- ing to their success as his Apostles, and giving them a lofty view of their office, He furnished them with a strong motive not to be unduly influenced by the conduct of Judas, but to maintain their alle- giance to Himself inviolate.

And here we may observe the exalted view which our Lord gives us of the ministers of the gospel. So to receive them and their instructions as to be- come the real disciples of divine truth, is to receive Christ ; as to receive Him, is to receive God : it is to be of the number of those who have Christ for their Saviour, and God for their portion ; whose ‘fellowship is with the Father and with the Son.’ But to reject the ministers of Christ, or to disregard the message which they deliver, treating it with in- difference or contempt, is to reject Christ and God : it is to prefer ignorance to knowledge, error to truth, sin to holiness, destruction to salvation. It is to despise the wisdom, mercy, and love of Je-

hovah, and to exalt ourselves, as though we needed nothing. There is a delightfulness, and there is also an awfulness in religion : and as we do not receive it without deriving from it the greatest benefit and the highest honour, so we do not neglect or reject it without incurring the greatest loss, disgrace, and misery. How cordially, then, should the heralds and ambassadors of Christ be welcomed ! With what humble and earnest attention should we listen to their heavenly instructions, and so receive them, through grace, as to be the temples of God by the indwelling of his Spirit !

5. The sinful proceedings of men are to be contemplated with tenderness and sorrow. ‘When Jesus had thus said, He was troubled in spirit.’ He was not troubled on his own account, for He saw in the conduct of Judas a measure that led to his own glorification : but He was troubled because He saw the atrocity of the offence and the punishment of the offender. Insensibility does not belong to the school of Christ. Our Saviour exhibited in himself the spirit of his gospel,—that spirit of tenderness, affection, and grief which his followers should cultivate. He wept at the grave of Lazarus ; over guilty Jerusalem ; and was ‘troubled in spirit’ when He viewed the case of Judas. The impotence, ingratitude, infatuation, and ruin of that unhappy man awoke in his holy bosom the feelings of tenderness and grief.

‘Fools make a mock at sin.’ But let us remember the spirit of our blessed Saviour, and see how we ought to be affected by the sins and follies of a

thoughtless world. Sin is not a subject for invective, raillery, or idle remark. ‘Rivers of tears run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.’ Thus David felt and spake : and if we rightly view sin and sinners, our thoughts, feelings, and language will harmonise with his. We shall look with tenderness, and grief, and even with anguish, on the wilful and deluded captives of iniquity : for how can we think of the abhorrence of the holy God, of the terrors of the day of judgment, and of the final despair of lost souls, and not feel our hearts overwhelmed with sadness and sorrow on their account ? How often do many of us view sin and sinners with indifference, or even with laughter ! But while we can look upon iniquity, and upon the workers of it, with any other emotions than those of lively and deep regret, we give a fearful indication that our frame of mind and heart are far from being that which piety demands.

6. Painful intelligence must be faithfully communicated when such a measure is necessary. After the minds of the disciples had been duly prepared, our Lord ‘Testified and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.’ It was important that He should make an explicit announcement of the treachery of Judas : but at the same time an express declaration of the traitor by name might have been injurious. Our Lord, therefore, acting with wisdom and kindness, only asserted what was sufficient to show his disciples that He knew their hearts and purposes ; leaving Judas at liberty to act as he judged fit, after what he had

heard. He manifested his own perfections, without obstructing the fulfilment of the divine counsel, and without influencing the conduct of any one. He told what would take place, but left the individual to act, as a moral agent, according to his own will. Judas was not impelled by Him to accomplish his evil purpose: nay, the assertion of our Lord afforded him an opportunity of thinking on what he was about to do, and of renouncing, if he chose, his treacherous design.

Thus the awful secret was divulged: and what were the feelings of the disciples? What were those of Judas? Why did he not confess his wickedness, cast himself down at the feet of Jesus, implore forgiveness, and abandon his project with abhorrence? Unhappy man! Satan prevailed in his evil and covetous heart, and he was obstinate and incorrigible: and we see in him an awful instance of the power of sin, hardening and stupefying all the faculties of the soul.

If we have painful statements to advance respecting the character, conduct, or purposes of any persons, let us remember the wisdom and tenderness which our Lord manifested on this occasion. It may be proper, or even necessary, to make such statements: but let them be made in a right spirit and manner. If we be honest and faithful, let us be also considerate and humane, regarding consequences as well as duty; that our declarations may possibly be of a remedial or preventive, and certainly not of an exacerbating, tendency.

II. We conclude the discourse with exhorting

you to improve, to your present and eternal benefit, the truths to which your attention has been directed.

1. Always remember that your hearts are open to the view of our blessed Saviour. You may obtain the approbation and applause of men by means of deception : but God cannot be deceived, and He will not be mocked. Study to live with an habitual consciousness of his presence : and, in order that you may be approved in his sight, let your prayer be ; ‘ Search me, O God, and know my heart : try me, and know my thoughts : and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.’

2. Be fully persuaded that the Scriptures will be accomplished. The history of all nations in all ages bears attestation to the truth of God’s word, and to its exact fulfilment. Let the pious, then, repose with unshaken confidence in the promises of God ; and let the careless tremble at his denunciations against the workers of iniquity. The sun and moon and stars of heaven may be extinguished, but not one jot or tittle of the divine word shall fail. Shall not the pious, therefore, persevere in well-doing ? Shall not the careless take warning, and flee from the wrath to come ? Shall not all Christians search the Scriptures, stand in awe of them, delight in them, and obey them ?

3. Let it be impressed on your hearts, that faith in Christ is the fundamental principle in true godliness. The Scriptures prove that He is the Messiah ; and we are to believe in Him as such ; not

merely assenting to that fact, but also receiving Him, looking to Him, and trusting in Him, with all the faculties of our enlightened and enlivened souls: for this is salvation, and this is glory. In vain do we admire the temple of divine truth, if we only gaze upon, and admire, its strength, beauty, and magnificence. We must walk into it, frequent it, listen to the voice of wisdom, and receive instruction. Never rest satisfied with the dead faith of the natural man, but seek of God that living faith which changes the natural man into a true Christian.

4. Rightly estimate and diligently improve the ministry of God's word. To receive the ministers of Christ so as truly to receive their message, is to receive Christ and God as your salvation and happiness. If any of you persist to reject the divine ordinance, your disobedience will be your ruin. Honour, we intreat you, the wise and gracious appointment of God: revere the public ministry of his word: 'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' Be considerate and teachable, humble and devout. Know what your privileges are, be thankful for them, and pray for grace that you may improve them to your salvation.

5. Cultivate a tender frame of heart towards a careless and sinful world. Warn men of their folly and danger, if you can do it; but warn them with kindness, as well as with fidelity. Let not the sins of others produce in you any feelings of self-admiration: for what are you by nature better than they; or what have you which you have not re-

ceived? Never let the sins of others be made the subject of unmeaning loquacity. View them, and feel sorrow; see what man is; learn the necessity of caution; and pray both for yourselves and for those who do not pray.

6. Learn the need of faithful self-examination. Judas, although a follower of Christ, was covetous: and Satan took advantage from this besetting sin, and led him from covetousness to treachery, and from treachery to self-destruction. To what an awful end may any one cherished sin conduct any of us! It may prevail in an unexpected hour, and plunge us into the deepest guilt and misery. O beware of covetousness and hypocrisy: look well to the heart; and pray for detachment from the world, and for soundness in religion.

Finally, would you be found in the last day 'clean every whit,' 'unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father;' among those who 'received Christ and Him that sent him?' Habitually and devoutly attend on the public ordinances of religion; but fail not to add to these your private duties: for if much is to be done in the Church, much also is to be done in the closet. Thus you will increase in knowledge, in faith, and in all holy affections; and your 'patient continuance in well doing' will be followed by the enjoyment of eternal life in the mansions above.

SERMON V.

Of Glorification, and of the New Commandment.

ST. JOHN, xiii. 31—35.

Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me ; and, as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go ye cannot come ; so now I say unto you. A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another ; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

IN the nine verses that precede the text, we have an account of what took place from the announcement of the betrayer to his departure from the disciples. Our blessed Lord had declared, that one of the twelve should betray Him ; and this information occasioned the greatest perplexity among them. They looked upon each other with doubt : and the disciple whom Jesus loved was beckoned to by Peter, that he should inquire of Him who the offender was. An answer was given to John in a low voice,

as may be inferred from verse 28th: 'He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it.' The individual was thus marked out. Our Lord gave the sop to Judas, and then 'Satan entered into him;' so that he was more eagerly intent on the execution of his evil design. There was an awful import in those words of our Saviour, 'What thou doest, do quickly.' The heart of Judas was under the full dominion of evil affections; and, instead of reflecting and relenting, he 'went out immediately;' and, it is added, 'it was night:' but the darkness that rested on the face of the earth was but a feeble emblem of the deeper darkness that rested on the soul of this unhappy man. After his departure the mind of Jesus seems to have been relieved; and He proceeded to address the eleven in the most sublime, affectionate, and interesting manner.

I. Let us consider what our Lord says concerning Glorification. 'Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.' Such are his words; and yet he appears to us as an humble individual, who was soon to be betrayed by one of his followers, to be repeatedly denied by another, and then to be forsaken by all of them;—who was soon to be derided, calumniated, vilified, condemned, insulted, and crucified. But in the immediate prospect of all this, He speaks of glorification. To the mortal eye all is weakness, darkness, and even ignominy: but every part of this myste-

rious transaction is connected with transcendent glory.

What ideas are we to attach to the word 'glorification' in reference to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ? It is evident, that glorification, when spoken of God, does not imply any addition to his glory or perfection; for that would be impossible: it means, therefore, the discovery of the divine attributes,—the rendering of them conspicuous, so that they shall be acknowledged by those to whom the discovery is made. God is glorified, and Christ is glorified, when their perfections are made known: and we glorify both God and Christ when we ascribe all perfection to them, and live as our knowledge of their perfections requires us to live. In short, God and Christ are glorified, objectively, when their glory or perfection is revealed; and they are glorified, subjectively, when we regard them, both in heart and conduct, as those who are to be supremely honoured by us in all things.

1. Our Lord says that He was glorified. 'Now is the Son of man glorified.' He viewed the departure of Judas as a measure which led to his own glorification;—not only to his resuming his original glory, but to his obtaining that glory which should redound to Him from the establishment of his kingdom in the world.—'The hour was come, that he should depart out of this world unto the Father:' and ought it not, we might ask, to have been exempted from every thing of a humiliating nature, and adorned with a splendour which would have confounded his adversaries? The fact is, His path

to the throne of mediatorial dignity lay through the valley of humiliation. Besides the glory which he was to enjoy of being 'at the right hand of the throne of God,' there was another which He was to receive,—the blessing, praise, and honour which would be ascribed to Him in all nations, and through all ages, by those who received the words of eternal life ;—and this glory was connected with his offering Himself upon the cross a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. In the view, therefore, of the consequences of things, He did not dwell in melancholy thought on his approaching sufferings. We behold Him upon the borders of the dark vale of affliction, but He is not dismayed. He does not confine his attention within the narrow boundaries of earth, but soars to the height of heaven. He does not limit his view to the narrow period of a few hours, but extends it to distant ages, the end of time, and the depths of eternity. He does not meditate in gloomy silence on the cup which He was about to drink, but joyfully revolves in his mind the issue of his gracious achievement. Every thing, in short, connected with his death, and which led to it, was associated in his breast with ideas of glory.

The expression of our blessed Saviour, 'Now is the Son of man glorified,' may be viewed as a prediction ; and then it is evident that it has been fulfilled, and is now in the course of fulfilment, and will be ultimately fulfilled in the universal prevalence of the gospel. He rose from the grave, and ascended into heaven ; and his word has triumphed

over the wisdom of human sages ;—over the pride of the lofty and the corruptions of the vile ; and his Name has been, and is, and shall be extolled as the only saving Name.

2. Our Lord says, that God was glorified in Him. ‘ And God is glorified in him.’ The redeeming work of ‘ the Word made flesh’ is evidently that work in which we have a peculiar and pre-eminent manifestation of God ; of his love and mercy, justice and holiness, wisdom and power. In this work we see his glory, and by it we, in an especial manner, ascribe glory to Him. There is, indeed, a discovery of the Creator in the visible universe ; for ‘ the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handywork.’ But it is in the Scriptures, it is in the face of Jesus Christ, that we clearly see the various perfections of God. Heathens had the volume of creation before them, and yet they sank into the grossest idolatry : but those who are favoured with the light of revelation worship the true God ; and wherever that light has penetrated, the altars of paganism have soon crumbled into dust. Examine the history of mankind ; and where do you see that God has been glorified, or known and honoured as God, by his rational creatures ? Where has He been acknowledged and worshipped with wisdom, purity, and spirituality, and obeyed as the supreme King and Legislator ? The betrayed, denied, forsaken, and crucified Redeemer is He who has revealed God to mankind ; and it is where the gospel has been published and inculcated that God has been glorified in the world.

The mere publication and establishment of the gospel among the nations is productive of many benefits to men : but it must be maintained, that its true recipients are those who know God in his perfections, counsels, and ways ; who love Him, trust in Him, worship Him, and obey Him ; who glorify Him by their pious and holy lives,—while He also is glorified in them, for they are visible and living demonstrations of his love, mercy, and grace—of his truth and power.

3. Our Lord speaks of further glory which He himself should receive from God. ‘ If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.’

i. When our Lord speaks of being straightway glorified by his Father, does He refer to the circumstances which preceded, attended, and followed his crucifixion ? Then we explain his words by referring to the sacred history. Not to enumerate particulars, we will here only mention the spirit with which his sufferings were sustained. When he was reviled, he reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not. He speaks while upon the cross in the language of prayer for his enemies ; of filial love on the behalf of Mary ; of consoling assurance to the penitent thief. No murmur proceeded from his lips ; no feeling of impatience disturbed his heart ; no anger flashed from his eyes : all was resignation, piety, meekness, and love.—Only glance at the miracles that attended and followed the crucifixion :—darkness covered the earth ; the veil of the temple was rent ; graves were open-

ed, and 'many bodies of the saints which slept arose;' and, to crown all, Christ was 'declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.' Though He suffered in weakness, degradation, and anguish, He was glorified; He was proved to be the Messiah,—the beloved Son, in whom the Father was well pleased.

ii. But, in the declaration of our Lord, are the words 'In Himself' to be understood of Christ, as referring to his own state, character, and office in the world above? Then we explain his assertion by considering what the exalted Saviour is in himself, and in relation to us. He triumphed over death and the grave; He led captivity captive, and ascended to that world where He is 'glorious in Himself.' He had declared to his disciples, 'All things are delivered unto me of my Father:' and, again, after his resurrection, 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.' St. Paul speaks thus of Christ, 'In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.' And further, 'And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the Head over all things to the Church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.' Explaining our Lord's words in the text by these and similar passages, we consider God as giving to Him a peculiar mediatorial glory, the fruit of his accomplished redemption, by which He is 'in Himself' King of kings and Lord of lords. But,

iii. Are the words 'In Himself' to be referred to the Father? Then we are led to a subject far

above our comprehension. When we think of the brightness of the Father's glory in Christ, and of the communion and equality which Christ has with the Father, let our faith in these things be firm, for they are scriptural discoveries; but let our thoughts be sober, and our words few. We are not to know every thing while we are on earth. Let the glances which the Scriptures allow us to take of these sublime matters elevate and enliven our souls: but let them also teach us our ignorance, and make us humble.

In this manner, then, did our blessed Saviour solace his own mind, and elevate the thoughts and comfort the hearts of his disciples. He passes, as it were, from darkness to light;—from the treachery of man to the glorification of God and of Himself.—But we proceed to consider,

II. *The New Commandment.* 'A new commandment give I unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.'—After having spoken of glorification, our Lord addressed his disciples in the affectionate terms 'little children'—terms expressive of the tenderest regard. He then announced to them his removal from their presence and society: 'Yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me; and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go ye cannot come; so now I say unto you.' Here He referred to his crucifixion and subsequent ascension into heaven. They would be anxious to see Him and to be with Him: but He was to execute his mediatorial offices above, and they were to remain for a

season upon earth, to make known to mankind the redemption that we have in Him. For their direction, however, He gave them a rule of conduct;—one of the distinguishing laws of his kingdom; the careful observance of which was intimately connected with their own happiness, the honour of the gospel, and the welfare of their fellow creatures.

1. We reflect on the Commandment: ‘That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.’—All religion, our duty to God and man, is comprehended in love. The entrance of sin into the world was the entrance into it of selfishness, hatred, discord, and variance. It introduced, or effected, alienation between God and man, and between men among themselves. But God has revealed Himself to us as He who is love, and whose gracious measures are designed to destroy sin and its fruits, and to restore love, amity, and unity between Himself and his alienated family, and between the members of that family with each other; and where his mercy and grace are received and faithfully used, love, union, and peace will always prevail and abound.

The disciples were enjoined to love one another;—not that the command was designed solely for them. They were, indeed, directed to cultivate and maintain that holy principle and affection among themselves: and it may be observed, that it is especially the duty of Christ’s ministers to cultivate and maintain it, and to show that they are men of love and peace: the Commandment, however, is of universal obligation. We are prone to

make ourselves our own centres ; and we often cherish feelings which we would be ashamed to avow. The natural operations of the heart, opposed as they are to the gospel, to its spirit and requirements, are to be guarded against and overcome. We are to seek, cherish, and exhibit a frame of mind and heart which is benevolent, compassionate, and kind. If, indeed, we rightly love our fellow creatures, we shall be solicitous to promote their welfare by our plans, language, and conduct : and in an especial manner shall we consult and attend to the benefit, comfort, and prosperity of Christ's faithful followers. It is ever to be remembered by us, that the gospel breathes a spirit of the purest and warmest love, and requires its disciples, while they cherish good-will towards all men, to be united in one affectionate fraternity, as partakers of the same Spirit and heirs of the same glory.

2. But our blessed Saviour fixes the measure, and supplies the model, of that mutual love which ought to subsist among his followers. Would we learn in what manner, and to what degree, we are to love our fellow Christians in particular, and our fellow creatures in general ? Let us meditate on the love of Christ,—his love to his disciples ; his love to our fallen world. His love was unbounded and unchanging. What sustained Him in his painful course from Bethlehem to Calvary ? Love for creatures set in proud opposition to Him ; unfailing love : and in the contemplation of it, we may see what love ought to be the ruling principle in our hearts. ‘ Hereby perceive we the love of God, be-

cause he laid down his life for us : and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.' And surely, if our love ought to be such as would induce us to make, if it were requisite, the greatest possible sacrifice, it ought to induce us to practise every thing that is benevolent and kind.

3. But, further, our Lord gave his Commandment a peculiar character. 'A new commandment give I unto you.' As to the mere letter of the command, it could not be called altogether new; for it is written in the Old Testament, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' But if we consider how this command had been forgotten, limited, or misconstrued by the Jews; and if we consider also the evangelical command as being not only to love one another, but to love another even as Christ hath loved us; we shall not hesitate to admit, that it was rightly termed by our Lord a new commandment. It was new as being revived and made prominent: and it was new as being urged on a new motive and a new model, and with an extent of application formerly unknown. Our Lord inculcated the principle and exercise of love;—of such love as He had exhibited in every part of his life, and which shone forth in its mildest and richest effulgence in the last scene of his humiliation;—of such love as had never been seen in the world before.

And here let us look to ourselves with regard to our principles, affections, and conduct; and ascertain how far we are attentive to the new commandment, or are unmindful of it. Are coldness, selfish-

ness, and indifference ; are anger, envy, and jealousy, with other affections contrary to love, confined to the men of the world ? If our fellow Christians differ from us in doubtful opinions ; if some of them be weak and of low stature in piety ; if some of them be ‘ overtaken in a fault ;’ do we show in our conduct towards them, and in our language respecting them, that we are governed by that charity which ‘ hopeth all things ?’ Perhaps this question will compel us to feel shame and confusion, and to acknowledge that the new commandment is one which we often violate. But surely a Christian is no further a follower of Christ than as he imbibes his spirit, imitates his example, and obeys his laws,—and particularly the law of love, the soul and substance of all the rest. Our profession of divine truth must be animated with love, or it is a dead profession : for truth without love is light without life. A knowledge of the truth may furnish our minds with notions and our tongues with language ; but it is love which forms our heaven here, and which fits us for heaven hereafter. Again,


4. Our Lord asserts mutual love to be the distinguishing badge by which his true followers are to be known. ‘ By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.’ The disciples of the Pharisees were known by their regard for traditions ; and those of the Baptist, by their fasting and austerity. How were the disciples of our Lord to be known ? Mutual love was to be their prominent and characteristic feature. Faith,

and works, and zeal for the truth are, more or less, essential things; but these will be found at last of no avail, unless our hearts are animated with a warm and pure love. If we exhibit the tempers and behaviour which we condemn in others, and if our spirit and conduct towards each other be such as prevail among the unthinking multitude, in what valuable respect are we better than they, or do we differ from them? In this case, what proof can we give that we are the true disciples of Christ? Whatever be the errors of worldly men as to the doctrines of religion, they can readily distinguish between what is right and wrong, excellent and perverse, in human character. If they see evil passions and contention and division among those who profess to be serious Christians, they will conclude that many of those who make high pretensions to piety are not much better, and perhaps much worse, than themselves. But if the divine principle of love pervade our hearts, and govern our lives, we shall find that it has a mild, attracting, and subduing efficacy, disarming opposition, softening prejudice, and compelling gainsayers to admit that true Christians are both good and amiable, living as the inheritors of heaven ought to live. It is thus that our Lord requires us to prove in the sight of all men that we belong to Him.

In conclusion, we observe,

1. There is every thing in the gospel of Christ to fill our minds with admiration and delight. To contemplate the scheme of redemption, as far as we are competent to the task, is to contemplate

the development of glory and goodness, whether our attention be directed to its sublime and gracious doctrines, or to its holy and just commands. We see in it the glory of the Father and of the Son ; and if we receive the gospel with the heart, we are led to glorify them,—to ascribe all honour and glory to them. If we look to ourselves, we find that we are required to live in the exercise of that love of which less cannot be said, than that it is the perfection of our nature. God is love ; Christ is love ; and the more we are love, the more are we like them. Thus we at once arrive at the conclusion, that to contemplate the discoveries of the gospel is to contemplate glory ; and to feel the proper effects of those discoveries is to feel love. The gospel, therefore, in its essential elements, both in its prominent features and in its most minute particulars, affords the highest satisfaction to every soul that really enters into it. It is in itself, pre-eminently, the display of infinite love,—of love that emanates from the throne of the universe ; that rests with its vital, purifying, and assimilating influence on the souls of believers ; that oft seeks admission where it does not find it, but diffuses, where it does find it, aught of heaven's splendour and aught of heaven's bliss in a world that sin has deformed and rendered miserable ; for by its attracting energy it draws every soul that yields to its might continually nearer to its uncreated source. The Father and the Son love us : we love them : we also love each other : and thus is love the band of union between Jehovah and his creatures, while




it is at the same time the band by which the latter are united among themselves, as the ransomed and sanctified family of the same Father, Redeemer, and Comforter. Here, then, we see what the gospel is, and what it requires;—how it fills, refines, cheers, exalts, and blesses the souls of all who rightly receive it. Let the reign of gospel light and of gospel love be pre-eminent within us; and then our life, in this cloudy region, with all that it may have of darkness, distress, and bitterness, is made no other than the commencement of an eternal life of blessedness, where the soul will behold nothing but effulgent glory, and feel nothing but perfect happiness in the exercise of perfect love.

2. But we cannot look upon Christians in general without lamenting either their neglect of the gospel, or their abuse of it. How few, comparatively, seem to behold any thing of the glory or perfections of God and of his Christ! With regard to our blessed Saviour, in the view of many ‘He hath no form or comeliness.’ Even now, as of old, ‘He is despised and rejected of men.’ Their understandings are blinded; they wilfully retain their errors; and they will not pray for divine wisdom, that they may obtain a spiritual apprehension of what is revealed to them. But, again, of those who profess to behold something of the divine glory, how few seem to feel in a prevailing manner the power of those truths which they profess to receive! How few attend rightly to the new commandment! We look around us, and we see the deep darkness of ignorance where there ought to

be the clear light of knowledge : and where we find something of the light of knowledge, are we not often compelled to deplore the absence of Christian love ? We leave this painful subject for your own consideration ; and observe,

3. That every one who would obtain salvation must seek and acquire sound Christian knowledge and efficient Christian principle. Let him use diligently all the means of instruction which God has given him ; praying for the enlightening and renewing agency of the Holy Spirit, that he may behold the glory of the Father and of the Son, that the love of them may be shed abroad in his heart, and that his heart may overflow with love towards all mankind. Then he will become truly pious ; and he will be anxious to increase in the knowledge of divine things, and to grow in grace. His persevering efforts will not be in vain ; for the influence from above will be poured upon him, and he will obtain that exalted goodness which reflects aught of the glory which he contemplates, and which breathes aught of that sublime, and holy, and warm, and affectionate spirit which is the essence of evangelical piety. Behold, then, the glory which solicits your contemplation—the spirit with which true believers are pervaded : and, as you regard your present and eternal happiness, be not satisfied with your state until you have some spiritual knowledge of them ; and then be never satisfied with your state but as you have the testimony of your conscience, that this knowledge, with all its inward and practical effects, is continually increasing.



SERMON VI.

Peter's denial of Christ.

ST. JOHN, xiii. 36, 37, 38.

Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, Whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go thou canst not follow me now: but thou shalt follow me afterwards. Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice.

OUR blessed Lord declared to his eleven disciples, as we saw in the preceding discourse, that He himself was glorified, that God was glorified in Him, and that He himself should in a little time be further glorified by the Father: He also gave them a new commandment. And shall not the disciples, we may ask, entertain the sublimest thoughts and the happiest feelings? Shall not inferior matters be forgotten in the consideration of Glory and of Duty? But Jesus spoke of his separation from them; and to this affecting circumstance their attention was especially directed. How often do we, in the hours of religious instruction, regard things which are comparatively of little amount, while

those of the greatest importance are neglected! 'Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, Whither goest thou?' To this question Jesus replied in obscure and prophetic language; 'Whither I go thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.' If He had plainly said, 'I am going to the cross, and thou too wilt suffer crucifixion for my sake;' the mind of Peter was not prepared for such a discovery: but He imparted knowledge to his hearers as they were able to bear it. Peter was not satisfied with our Lord's reply, and proceeded to ask, 'Lord, why cannot I follow thee now?' adding with his characteristic vehemence and promptitude, 'I will lay down my life for thy sake.' The ardour of the self-confident disciple was immediately checked by this declaration: 'Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice.'

Our blessed Lord had foretold the apostacy of Judas, and He now foretells the temporary unfaithfulness of Peter. He comforted and strengthened the hearts of the sorrowful and timid, and He corrected the boldness and rashness of the presuming. In this we see his wisdom and goodness. We direct your attention at present to the prompt and ardent Peter, and we shall then observe the fulfilment of our Lord's prediction.

I. We direct your attention to Peter.—The careful readers of the gospels will have often noticed the readiness and confidence with which this disciple put himself forward and spoke on various occa-

sions. In the history before us, we see that he was not satisfied with our Lord's answer to his question: he did not calmly consider it, but yielded to his natural vehemence; he proposed another question, and advanced a strong and positive assertion in unqualified terms. The study of human character is of great importance to every one. What, then, was the state of mind and heart which we discover in the language of Peter? 'I will lay down my life for thy sake.'

1. We see here the Sincerity of Peter. He gave utterance to the excited feelings of an honest heart. His conscience assured him that he was faithfully attached to his divine Master. He had been familiar with him for a long time, and could not endure the thought of being deprived of his society. He perhaps, regarded our Lord's expression respecting his departure as an intimation of his going to some distant land: he, therefore, avowed his willingness to share his fatigues and privations, his dangers and difficulties, provided he might remain with Him. The idea of separation from Him was intolerable to his mind; and his avowal described the genuine feelings of his heart.

We admire the cordial attachment of this disciple to the blessed Jesus: and we put him before you as a pattern worthy of your imitation. Learn of Peter to love your Saviour with sincerity; to seek his abiding presence; to dread nothing so much as his removal from you; to cherish in your hearts such a sincere regard towards Him as will make you ready to abandon every thing, and to

undergo every thing, for his sake. You ought to know far more of his glory than Peter at this time knew. Much darkness rested upon his mind; many worldly thoughts, feelings, and expectations resided within his breast; for at this period he chiefly knew Christ after the flesh. He by no means rightly understood his character, correct as some of his sentiments were. But in this state of imperfect knowledge he could say, 'I will lay down my life for thy sake.' What, then, ought our feelings towards our Saviour to be, who are favoured with a full discovery of Him!

2. We see the ignorance of Peter. He had been repeatedly rebuked by our Lord, but he had not made a due improvement of His reproofs. We find him at present destitute of that reflection which the case demanded, and of that self-knowledge which he ought to have possessed. How slowly did he profit by what he heard and saw! He was by no means practically acquainted with his own heart; with the weakness and frailty of human nature; with the power of temptation; or with the perils to which we are exposed in peculiar circumstances. He forgot that man is no longer safe than while he walks humbly, distrusts himself, and puts his entire confidence in God. His language affords the clearest proof, that he did not rightly know himself.

It may be here observed, that deep and accurate self-knowledge is invaluable, but that we are in general a long time in making any proficiency in it. The case of Peter should teach every Chris-

tian the weighty lesson, that affection, sincerity, and zeal are, of themselves, no effectual safeguards in the hour of trial. Young Christians especially will do well to consider this. Their feelings may be alive and ardent, while their minds may not be well informed; and their conduct may often prove that their piety, however fervent, is not solid, strong, and mature: it may be such as appears bright and lovely in sunshine and serenity, but yet is unfit and unable to endure the storm and tempest. Zeal and affection are indispensable in religion; but so are other things, and particularly that acquaintance with ourselves which can never be obtained but by restraining our impetuous emotions, and exercising much calm reflection. Religion without zeal and affection is sluggish and inactive, and without self-knowledge it is very insecure. Of whatever we are ignorant, we must not be ignorant of ourselves, if we would proceed in a course of prosperous piety—firm and consistent in all circumstances.

3. We see here the Self-confidence of Peter. ‘I will lay down my life for thy sake.’ He would make the greatest sacrifice without any hesitation. He scorns to calculate on the possible misgiving or treachery of the heart in the day of trial. He makes no reference to divine help. He is transported by his zeal, and forgets that the confident disciple is only a feeble mortal. He does not recollect the moment when he was trembling and sinking among the waves. He is hurried along by his unreflecting impetuosity; and, as if he were

one whom no foe could intimidate, or danger terrify, or difficulty vanquish, he is prompt and eager to go forth, and to engage in the most perilous undertaking. It is in the strength of his own puny arm, and in the resolve of his own unstable mind, that he trusts. Where is humility, or sober and modest thought, or becoming diffidence, to be found in his unqualified avowal? We search in vain for these: the wisdom and meekness of the believer are lost in the unthinking confidence of the bold and ardent mortal.

But let the serious Christian calmly reflect on this striking and painful exemplification of human folly. Who of us is a stranger to the proud operations of self-confidence? How often, whatever we may say about human weakness, do we go forth to our duties, dangers, and difficulties in the poor and paltry panoply of our own strength and wisdom! How often does the young Christian mistake his natural ardour for the operations of divine grace! How often is pride practically retained when it is speculatively renounced! How often do we forget in our plans and conduct that humility which we loudly extol in the moments of reflection? We condemn the self-confidence of Peter: and can we justify ourselves in indulging our own?

4. We see here the Temerity of Peter. Bold professions, made without consideration and humility, must be rash. Such was the profession of Peter. Had he expressed his zeal, wishes, and resolves, and yet avowed his inability to act rightly by his own strength, and referred to that mighty

hand by which he had been once rescued from death, we should have admired him for his wisdom and sobriety, as well as for the warm feelings which animated his heart. He would then have displayed a deliberating, prudent, and pious frame of spirit : but as the case is, we are compelled to think of him as an indiscreet and rash man.

Let us here, then, learn to beware of rashness. We are weak ; we are surrounded with dangers : and, therefore, before we engage in what is arduous, and assure others or ourselves that we shall exhibit singular excellence in some emergency, let us not fail to consider what we are, and what are our only resources ; lest we utter with our lips what will be afterwards the occasion to our souls of shame, confusion, and anguish. Not to act thus is to act rashly : and rashness, equally opposed to religion and reason, is commonly the forerunner of distress ; since it leads to defeat where we had promised ourselves the honours of victory.

II. But we proceed to consider the fulfilment of our Lord's prediction. His declaration in the text amounts to this—'Thou professest the greatest things, but art unable to perform the least : for notwithstanding thy zeal and promptitude, thou wilt within a short time repeatedly deny me, rather than expose thyself to any risk on my account.'—What feelings must this declaration have awakened in the breast of Peter ! He who thought himself competent to do every thing, is informed that he can do nothing. The intrepid adherent is taught that he will prove a timid denier. But shall not

such intelligence make him attentive, cautious, and vigilant? The hour of trial and danger came, and what do we see in the warned disciple? Alas! we see in him,

1. Forgetfulness. His attachment to our Lord was indeed such as would not allow him to abandon Him, when He was delivered up into the hands of His enemies. With his characteristic zeal he had drawn the sword in the defence of his divine Master. When he was admonished by Him in that affecting language, 'Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?' he complied with the command, and followed Him into the palace of the High Priest. He now stood upon dangerous ground, where he ought to have remembered the warning which he had received: and how was it possible that he should forget it? Must he not have felt a trembling anxiety lest he should be guilty of some offence? Must he not have reflected, that if he maintained his allegiance for a short season he would be safe? But the prophetic warning had, as to the present hour, been given him in vain. 'Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.' The declaration of our Lord is still forgotten, and the offence is repeated. It is not yet recalled to mind, and a third denial completes the offence, and fulfils the prediction. Peter rushed into danger: this was his imprudence. He forgot the warning: here was heedlessness and folly. He was an unhum-

bled and unreflecting man : and he who had lately been so courageous as to draw his sword in the presence of an armed multitude, might perhaps conclude that he had nothing to fear. His spirit, however, amid the confusion of the scene, seems to have been perplexed and stupified : and the words of our Lord had no place in his recollection. —In perilous seasons let us be careful to remember the word of God : for it will keep us from danger, or support and preserve us in it.

2. We see the Cowardice of Peter. He was not a prisoner, hurried to the bar of justice. There was nothing peculiarly intimidating in his circumstances. He was a spectator in the crowd, and might have left it when he saw proper. He was questioned by one damsel, and then by another, and lastly by a kinsman of Malchus. Where was his courage that he could not avow the truth to such persons ? When zeal subsides, and there is no strong and sustaining principle in the soul, he who lately appeared to be determined and resistless may be found to be a feeble, hesitating, and trembling mortal. Qualities of a higher order and firmer texture than animated feelings are essential in trying emergencies. The petulant questions of two damsels and of a servant awoke the fears of Peter, and divested him of his courage : and we see in him a humiliating instance of cowardice.

Let us, then, not fail to learn, that in order to be valiant for the truth, and steadfast in our profession of it, the mighty energy of sound principle, wrought and maintained in the soul by a power

from above is indispensable. If we be left to ourselves, how easily are we seduced from rectitude in the day of prosperity, and terrified from it in the day of trial! Then we learn, that human fortitude cannot support human weakness. Our vaunted moral heroism shrinks before the frown of the mighty, or melts away before the smile of flattering seducers. He only is strong who is 'strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.'

3. We see the Falsehood of which Peter was guilty. He was merely asked a question, which he might have answered, or not. He does not evade it; he does not keep silence; but he advances a gross falsehood, and this repeatedly, and apparently without hesitation. He was exposed, we presume, only to ridicule or calumny, and these he strove to shun in a manner as despicable as it was sinful. Evasion might have had the colour of prudence; but when he resorted to palpable and reiterated falsehood, we must acknowledge that his fall was deep.

Such is man. When he forgets himself and divine succour, he is liable to adopt almost any means to extricate himself from difficulty and danger. Past professions and future consequences are disregarded; and, in the ascendancy of selfish feelings, truth and piety and character are unhesitatingly sacrificed, that personal safety may be secured. But again,

4. We see the Impiety of Peter. To forget the warning voice of our Lord was bad; to manifest cowardice was worse: to utter falsehood was an

aggravation of his offence ; but when he became profane, he gave to his sin the darkest shades of enormity. Whom did he deny ? Him whom he had confessed to be 'the Christ, the Son of the living God.' How did he deny Him ? Not merely with simple assertion, but also with impious language. 'Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man.'

This painful transaction is recorded for our benefit. Let us not reproach the erring disciple, or aim to vindicate any of our follies and weakness by a reference to his misconduct : but let us rather learn what human nature is, see the deceitfulness and operations of sin, and attend to our own hearts and conduct. In the warmth of our feelings, we may make a wrong estimate of our character, thrust ourselves heedlessly into perilous circumstances, and not see what an improper step we have taken, until we have covered ourselves with shame, and pierced our hearts with the keenest anguish. Peter thought, doubtless, that he stood upon firm ground ; but he took no heed to his ways, and he fell deeply, though not irrecoverably. What need have we to remember at all times the important caution, 'Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall !'

Thus we have seen the fulfilment of our Lord's prediction respecting Peter. When this disciple had thrice repeated his denial of his divine Master 'Immediately the cock crew.' He had fallen deeply, as we observed, but not irrecoverably : and it may be proper, though it does not strictly belong to our

subject, to notice his recovery. St. Matthew thus records his repentance; 'And he went out, and wept bitterly;' St. Mark thus; 'And when he thought thereon, he wept.' St. Luke is more minute: 'And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.'—Our Lord 'looked upon Peter.' What love and tenderness and pity, what reproof and admonition, were in that look! Peter then 'remembered' what had been said to him. He quickly left the scene of his offence, thought upon his misconduct, and wept, yea, wept bitterly. Here is true true repentance: remember your sins; quit sinners and the ways of sin; think of your sins; and be of a broken spirit and of a contrite heart on account of them. As the offence of Peter is recorded for our warning, so is his repentance recorded for our instruction and consolation. If in some unhappy hour we fall through human weakness and corruption, we see how recovery to spiritual health, peace, and comfort is to be obtained,—by retirement, consideration, godly sorrow, and earnest prayer,—prayer for pardon through the blood of Christ,—prayer for the sanctifying, strengthening, and consoling influences of the Holy Spirit. Thus we are warned against presumption and against despair.

We close the discourse with a few remarks: and here,

1. We may learn not to mistake zeal and confi-

dent profession for solid piety. We may have much of the former, and yet be very defective in the latter. Many things, such as the serious consideration of the transitory nature of this world, of the blessedness and glory of heaven, and of the awful consequences of sin, may excite our affections, and produce many good thoughts within us; and we may then hastily conclude that we are decided Christians. We smile, perhaps, if we hear of difficulty and danger, and we think of nothing but of success and victory. But the season of trial comes; and then we are taught, by a melancholy defeat, the emptiness of our estimate and calculations. We mistook our ardour and affection for deeply-rooted principle. We forgot that humility and self-distrust are not only invaluable, but essential qualities in the Christian character. As, therefore, we would consult the honour of religion, our own prosperity and peace, and the benefit of others, let us always bear in mind the wide difference that exists between animated profession and solid principle. Again,

2. We ought to remember that a due sense of our own weakness is essential to our safety. If we cherish this, we shall never depend on our own understanding, or go into a world of temptation relying on our own strength, or advance those strong and positive assertions which prove the impetuosity of a feeling heart, but not the wisdom of a reflecting mind. If we do not renounce ourselves, we rely on ourselves; we cherish within us, however secretly, feelings of self-sufficiency. But

let us recollect the explicit declarations of Scripture: 'Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.' 'God resisteth the proud; but he giveth grace to the humble.' And let us pray for that deep, unfeigned, and habitual humility which springs from a just knowledge of ourselves and of our circumstances. That Christian is most strong and safe who constantly retains a full conviction of his own weakness and insufficiency; for he will meekly look to the sole Fountain of power and might. 'When I am weak, then am I strong.' Lastly,

3. It becomes us to live in constant dependence upon divine grace, and to seek it in earnest and believing prayer. In every step of our course we need the power from above; and especially in seasons of peculiar trial and danger. The life, health, and strength, the safety and happiness of the soul, depend on the incessant operation of divine influence. It is by this only that we can surmount difficulties, resist temptations, repel enemies, perform assigned duties, endure allotted sufferings, stand firm and faithful in the evil day, and maintain steadfastly our Christian integrity to the last. If the Spirit of Christ strengthen us, we shall be able to do all things. Here is our resource. If we renounce ourselves, and look to this, we may say with truth, that Omnipotence is our shield and defence: and then we shall go forth among the foes and dangers that crowd the perilous arena of human life, as David went against the Philistine, 'in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the

armies of Israel;' and we shall be firm, courageous and victorious. If, indeed, we would be consistent and happy followers of Christ; if we would profess that we are professors of the sanctifying power of the gospel; if we would 'adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things;' we must spend our days in the diligent exercise of faith and prayer, humility and circumspection. Seriously and earnestly attending to these things, there will not be wanting 'ought of any good thing which the Lord has spoken' unto his people: we shall walk with safety and honour, with peace and joy and gratitude, in the path of righteousness;—that path which will conduct us to the world where the enemies and dangers, the inconsistencies and weaknesses, the sins and sorrows of the present state will be unknown for ever.


SERMON VII.

The Disciples comforted with Assurances of Heaven.

ST. JOHN, xiv. 1, 2, 3, 4.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself: that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

IF we consider the character and circumstances of the eleven disciples, we cannot be surprised at their having been troubled in heart. Their views and expectations were opposed. Our blessed Lord had washed their feet, taught them humility, announced the betrayer, enjoined mutual love, given intimation of his departure from them, and predicted that Peter would deny Him. What conflicting emotions must all this have produced in bosoms so strongly pre-occupied as theirs were with worldly calculations! Their hopes might have been raised by the triumphant entry into Jerusalem; but these were now destroyed; and grief became the prevailing feeling. Our Lord knew their distress, and administered to them the purest consolation, by un-



folding the nature of his kingdom, and pouring upon their spirits some of the brightest beams of evangelical truth.

If you entertain false notions and prejudices respecting the gospel, as though it were gloomy, forbidding, and repulsive, we would urge you to study such a passage of Scripture as the text, in order that you may see the utter injustice of your present views and feelings. The language of our Lord to his disciples is also his language to his faithful followers in all ages : and if we rightly meditate on the sublime declarations and consolatory assurances which are here advanced, we shall see something of the glory of the gospel and of the happiness of its true disciples.

I. Let us briefly examine these verses in reference to our Lord's immediate followers.


'Let not your heart be troubled.'—'Let not your souls be distressed; let them not be thrown into confusion by any thing that I have advanced, or may yet advance.'—The information which He had given them of his approaching departure had produced its natural effect. They were troubled by it. Their views of worldly grandeur were vanishing away as unsubstantial dreams. Nor was this all; for they were to be deprived of their Master's presence; and what could they then expect from the Jews but contempt, ridicule, and persecution? Our Lord saw their perplexity, and addressed them in consolatory words.

'Ye believe in God, believe also in me;' or, 'Believe in God, believe also in me.'—He reminds

them of faith, the fundamental and sustaining principle in religion. He leads them at once to the source of strength and comfort. He shows them the basis of the true Christian character,—confidence or trust in God, who would never forsake them, and confidence or trust in Himself, through whom, as the Mediator, and from whom, as the living Head of the Church, all spiritual blessings were to be derived. He taught them that religion is principle—a life of faith ; and that, when He was removed from them as to bodily presence, they were to believe in God, in Christ, and in all the discoveries and declarations which had been made to them.

‘In my Father’s house are many mansions.’ Our Lord passes from the principal to its ultimate object. He guides the thoughts of his disciples from earth to heaven ; from the visible to the invisible world ; from the transitory to the eternal state. By the expression, his ‘Father’s house,’ heaven is meant : and in the expression, ‘many mansions,’ He alludes to the palaces of earthly potentates, or to the Jewish temple, which had chambers round about it : probably intimating that in the world of blessedness there is ample room for the saints in their various orders, according to their different measures of attainment in pious excellence.

‘If it were not so, I would have told you.’ He, in fact, assures them that He was no deceiver, and that there was no ground for the sceptical notions of the Sadducees respecting a future state. If there




were not an abiding after-state, He asserts that He would not have allowed them to cherish vain expectations. Convinced, therefore, of his veracity, they might direct their minds to the sublimest contemplation of futurity, whatever were the trials and sorrows of the present state.

‘I go to prepare a place for you.’ It is as though He had said, ‘I am going to the cross, to the grave, and afterwards to the spiritual world, where I shall not be unmindful of you, but shall be engaged in those effectual services on your behalf which will insure your eternal happiness.’—How well suited was this assurance to revive the drooping spirits of the disciples—and especially at a future period, when they understood the office of our Lord above as a perpetual Intercessor!

‘And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that were I am, there ye may be also.’ Our Lord had spoken of separation, and He now speaks of reunion. When he had completed his work He would come again, and receive them into that close and intimate alliance with Himself which would constitute their bliss through eternity: they would behold his glory and share his happiness. His immediate society was what they wished to enjoy; and here a renewal of it, in a more exalted state, as also in a more glorious form, is promised to them.

‘And whither I go ye know; and the way ye know.’ That is, ‘After the instructions which I have given you, I must not suppose that you are ignorant as to the place where I am going, and as



to the way which leads to that blissful abode." Thus they were reprov'd in gentle terms for their worldly views, and an opportunity was given them of obtaining further information.

In this manner, then, our blessed Saviour condescended to regard the infirmities and to comfort the hearts of his disciples, in the season of their trouble and perplexity. Every sentence was as a healing balm, to soothe the anguish of the wounded heart.

II. We now examine these verses as they are applicable to all true Christians. And here we offer a few remarks on their troubles and on their consolations.

1. The Troubles of real believers. The life of man is a pilgrimage in a vale of tears; and however he may indulge in mirth and pleasure, he cannot change the character of human existence. He may banish serious reflection from his mind; he may amuse himself with dreams and fancies: but he will be more or less familiar with change and disappointment, with vexation, pain, and grief.—But we are to speak about the truly pious; about those by whom the doctrines of the gospel are known and its power felt; who love God, enjoy his favour, and strive to do his will. And are these persons exempted from trouble and sorrow? Certainly not. They escape, it is true, many of the sufferings which wicked men bring upon themselves; but yet they share the common lot of human beings; and, in addition to the ordinary trials of life, they have those which are peculiar to themselves, as the

servants of Christ. All that comes under the description of spiritual trial properly speaking, is a matter not known and not felt by the world, who are 'dead in trespasses and sins,' but which is very familiar to those who are really alive to good and evil. If the pious calculated, at the beginning of a religious life, on the enjoyment of a bright and peaceful day, yet they soon learn, in the plain and sober path of experience, that life has dark as well as bright shades, tumult as well as tranquillity; and, in short, that the Christian course is labour, not rest; warfare, not repose; hope, rather than fruition; a journey through a wilderness, not a walk in a paradise.

There may be seasons of peculiar trial and sorrow in the life of a true believer. The day may occasionally be very tempestuous—the path thorny, the burden heavy, the conflict severe. There may be fightings without, and fears within. He may be visited with some trying dispensation: and when all around him is bright and peaceful, the rains may descend, the floods come, the winds blow; and although they cannot overturn him, for his foundation is upon a rock, yet trouble, sadness, and anguish may abound for a season. Job is not the only man who has lamented the sudden loss of property and of children. Naomi is not the only woman who has said, or has had occasion to say, 'Call me not Naomi; call me Mara; for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.' The Psalmist is not the only person who has said, 'Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted

me with all thy waves.' 'Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord.'

We only thus glance at the troubles of real believers. They are liable to affliction to mind, body, and estate : nay, more, as the children of God they must expect affliction : 'for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons : for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not ?' But we observe,

2. The Consolations of true believers. In their troubles and sorrows they are not left forlorn and destitute. 'Believe in God, believe also in me.' The great religious principle, a sure trust in God, is their support and comfort. Trust in God as the gracious Father, and trust in Christ as the only Mediator—here is the life, strength, and peace of the real Christian.


Look on the man of the world in the day of temporal trial ; and he knows not whither to direct to his view, but is as a vessel that is left in a dark night to the mercy of the winds and waves. He may be careless and obdurate ; or he may be light and trifling ; or he may be alarmed and terrified ; or he may be gloomy and sullen ; or he may be peevish and querulous. One man may have speculative notions and pride, and he manifests a spurious fortitude, and accounts it weak and childish to complain. Another flies to his fellow creatures for aid and comfort. Another plunges into worldly schemes and cares, or rushes into amusement and gaiety. Another sits down in moody melancholy,

broods over his calamities, and is the victim of a repining and complaining heart. They would enjoy comfort; but they know not where to look for it, and remain without it.—Not such is the case of the pious. They cherish and exhibit magnanimity, patience, and unruffled composure, or even ‘glory in tribulations;’ in all the vicissitudes of human life. What is the secret of their bliss? Whence do they derive this strength, peace, and joy? They turn to God; they think of his perfections, counsels, and ways; they meditate on his promises; they consider the design and end of his measures; they have the full persuasion that He orders all things in unerring wisdom, does all things in infinite benignity, and makes ‘all things work together for good to them that love Him.’ To Him they make their prayer; in Him they put their trust; and they are supported and comforted in all their troubles. By the power of a living faith they rise above the weakness and perverseness of human nature: their spirit is resignation, their feelings those of gratitude, and their language praise.

But, further, the men of the world may not be entirely strangers to mental trouble: we can scarcely suppose that their consciences are always lulled in a dead repose. Surely the thought of death, of the grave, of the final judgment, of everlasting woe as well as of everlasting bliss, will rush occasionally into the bosoms of the worldly and the vain, and excite feelings of disquietude. How do they banish fear and solicitude far from them, and proceed in their course with gay security? Perhaps they ba-

lance their virtues against their vices, and vaguely refer to the divine mercy. Perhaps they compare themselves to others, and speak peace to their hearts on the ground of a presumed superior excellence. Perhaps they plunge into revelry, and welcome almost any thing that serves to stifle painful conviction. All their comfort springs from stupefying the soul by folly and delusion.

The real Christian has inward trouble, and his soul may frequently be perplexed and sad within him. We do not here aim to describe spiritual darkness and distress, or to enumerate its causes. We only ask, What is the conduct of the righteous soul, and where does it seek for comfort, in the day of its anguish? It does not trifle with its woe, or account it fancy and moping melancholy, or stifle or expel it by erroneous notions or worldly folly. Its principle is faith; and in the exercise of that principle it approaches God in Christ Jesus at the throne of grace, and there seeks comfort by humble and earnest prayer. When the cloud gathers around him, when joy is fled, when he walks in darkness and sees no light, the believer makes it a season of reflection, of self-examination, of deep humiliation, and of fervent devotion. He does not look to himself, or to others, or to worldly objects for relief; but he cherishes the workings of a tender and contrite heart, and looks up with an imploring eye to the gracious Friend of penitent souls, who says to his tried and afflicted followers, 'Let not your hearts be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me.' His support is faith; he relies



on the truth, mercy, and love of Jehovah ; and as his faith prevails, his consolation abounds.


But let it be here distinctly observed, that the Bible is the book of consolation to the true believer : and we will now consider how all true believers may use the verses which compose our text for their consolation in the days of trouble and sorrow. We will suppose that they put these verses before them ; and will furnish them with such language as they may, and as, we think, they ought to use.

‘ Let not your heart be troubled : believe in God, believe also in me.’ ‘ These are the encouraging words in which the compassionate Saviour addresses us. Our trials are many and severe : but why should we be troubled ? Let us look to God who orders all things ; and to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the good Shepherd. Our troubles are laid upon us for our benefit—‘ for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.’ It is good for us that we should be tried and afflicted ; for ‘ tribulation worketh patience ; and patience, experience ; and experience, hope ; and hope maketh not ashamed.’ We look to Thee, our God and Father ; to Thee, our gracious Saviour : we believe, by divine grace, in the word of truth, and we cannot be troubled : composure and peace prevail in our confiding souls.’

‘ In my Father’s house are many mansions : if it were not so, I would have told you.’ ‘ Thou thyself, O blessed Jesus ! art the truth, and thy word is truth. Thou hast ‘ brought life and immortality

to light through the gospel.' If this world is a wilderness, yet there is a Canaan above. If this world be a pilgrimage, yet it leads to a blessed and a happy home in the realms of light. We may gain possessions here, but we shall soon leave them. We may build houses, but we shall not long inhabit them. We may shine in pomp and elegance, but we shall soon lie down in the dust. But mansions—mansions above—mansions above in our Father's house—an abiding residence in the world of glory—a place in that city which hath foundations:—this is our comfort; and in the view of these sublime objects, we lose sight of the vanishing distinctions which prevail on earth; of the splendour of the great, and of the humble appearance of those of low estate. To dwell in the house of God above, to behold his glory, and to be near Him and like Him—this is elevation so magnificent, and enjoyment so pure, that, dim as our apprehensions of them are, we cannot mention, or even notice, the troubles and sorrows of mortality.'

'I go to prepare a place for you.' 'While we are suffering and toiling in a world of sin and care, the Lord Jesus Christ is employed on our behalf in the heavenly world. We have an Advocate with the Father, who looks upon us, who feels for us, who hears our prayers, and who does whatever is needful to promote our welfare. By the favour of men we may obtain those treasures and honours which procure admiration and flattery; or we may hear from them the language of condolence in the day of grief. But these things are only the things



of a moment; nor can they heal the wounded spirit, dispel its darkness, or open before it the prospect of final blessedness. Thou, O Saviour! art our Benefactor and Comforter: we look to Thee, and to thy advocacy and intercession, and we have peace and joy amid the changes and sorrows of the present state.'


'And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again.' 'The gracious and glorious Redeemer is far removed from the sphere of human vision; yet is He spiritually present with his people; and at the appointed time he will again appear, and every eye shall see him. The heavens have received Him until the purposes of God are accomplished; and then He will come to be the Judge of all men, to the joy and triumph of his faithful followers. A few more rolling years, and we shall quit this agitated world, and behold Him who is the object of our faith. We meditate on the final glory, and banish our sorrow.'

'And receive you to myself: that where I am, there ye may be also.' 'When time is exchanged for eternity, where shall we be? Where our glorified Redeemer is. With whom shall we be? For ever with the Lord. Delightful thought! But what language can express, or what mind conceive, the blessedness of the righteous in the presence of God and of the Lamb through everlasting ages? These frail tabernacles will sink into the grave; but they will be raised again, pure and immortal; and then the happiness of the redeemed and sanctified will be perfect. How, then, can we be troubled in

heart, when we know that the ills and sorrows of time will pass away as the mist of the morning, and be succeeded by the glory and felicity of heaven ?’

‘ And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.’ ‘ Thou, O gracious Saviour ! art in heaven, at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and Thou thyself art the Way. Though we are ignorant—of ourselves mere ignorance—yet by thy word and Spirit we have the best knowledge. In the light of thy holy word, we know both where Thou art, and what Thou art to thy Church. We look to thy Cross, thy Spirit, thy Commandments, thy Example, thy Intercession ; and we see the way, and the means by which thy true disciples arrive at the regions of eternal bliss, and stand accepted in the presence of Jehovah,—to leave it no more for ever. Our souls are satisfied : and we can rejoice amidst the trials, changes, and sorrows,—the light afflictions of the present time, which are but for a moment.’

It is in this manner that the true believer may and ought to meditate on these delightful verses, and to derive the consolation which they are designed to impart to all holy and troubled souls.—What has been now advanced is sufficient, we trust, to show all reflecting persons, that the gospel of Christ abounds with what is equally glorious and consolatory ; elevating and soothing to the soul. The fell enchantress Folly may fling a fascinating charm and a dazzling splendour over the varied scenes of life : but the charm will be soon dissolved,



and the splendour vanish from our view. Sorrow and trouble are the birthright of man : and if the life of the gay and prosperous be looked upon as a bright picture, yet on close inspection we shall find that it abounds with deep and dark shades. Philosophy may reason to us, and Pleasure may amuse us ; but still we are sufferers. And where shall we look for comfort, joy, and peace ? To the Gospel, to Christ, to Heaven. The Wisdom from above sheds light and glory on the present scene, while it also reveals a perfect light and a perfect glory beyond it : so that we can lose the sight of present deformity, and the sense of present suffering, by virtue of the life which we feel within us, and of the magnificence which we see before us. If an Eden yet exist on earth, the kingdom of God's dear Son is that Eden : and there indeed we gather flowers that will not wither, and drink the living waters of a fountain that will not fail.

In closing the discourse, We ask you, or rather beseech you to ask yourselves, whether or no you are strangers to the gospel of Christ,—strangers, we mean, to its mercy and grace, to its light and power, to its healing and consoling virtues. If you be, consider seriously what it is which you are disregarding and despising. Your present peace is slumber and death ; your hopes are vain presumptions ; and your happiness is but little more than an insensibility to misery. We rejoice to speak before you of glorious mansions : but it is also our duty to remind you, that there is a prison of anguish and despair,—the final dwelling of the im-

penitent and unbelieving. Jesus will come again, and receive his people to himself; but in that day He will banish for ever the wicked from his presence. While you neglect to attend to the gospel, you put from you all that can make you truly happy here, and prepare you for a hopeful death, and a blessed eternity. Lay this to heart, and do not forfeit the glory and the bliss of heaven for the pleasures of sin and the vanities of a transitory world.

If you be truly and spiritually acquainted with the gospel, we call upon you to act in agreement with your professions and hopes. Let the declarations contained in the text be to you the sources of the purest consolation, whatever be the troubles of human life. Knowing and experiencing the mercy and grace which are revealed in the Scriptures, and having the prospect of eternal happiness, neither complain, nor be dismayed, nor be impatient. Be it your prayer, desire, and endeavour to do and to suffer according to the will of God. Thus will the divine life flourish within you; you will abound in the fruits of righteousness; your consolation will be great and unfailing: yea, that peace which passeth all understanding will be granted to you,—a foretaste of the perfect bliss which will be your portion in the mansions of your Father's house.

SERMON VIII.

*The Lord Jesus Christ the Way, and the Truth,
and the Life.*

ST. JOHN, xiv. 5, 6, 7.

Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

It is a melancholy but undeniable fact, that Christians do not improve their religious privileges as they ought. Are they not, in general, painfully destitute of any thing like a proper acquaintance with the Gospel? Satisfied with vague notions and lifeless forms, and absorbed in the cares and pleasures of this world, they do not exert themselves to become familiar with the Scriptures. If, indeed, we examine the pious, shall we not find them, in many instances, very defective in the knowledge of divine truth? A sound knowledge of it cannot be obtained without much, and long, and persevering exertion—without study, prayer, and close meditation: and many prefer the adoption of a few com-

mon ideas to the strenuous work of endeavouring to sink deeply into the mine of revelation.

‘And whither I go, ye know; and the way ye know;’—thus our Blessed Lord spake to his disciples. It might be presumed that, with their privileges, they would have some clear notions of Messiah and of his kingdom. But their minds had been occupied with worldly views and expectations: and Thomas candidly avows their ignorance. ‘Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?’ We cannot tell with what feelings this confession was made: but we admire the condescension and affectionate conduct of our Lord. He utters no reproof: but as He had put a glorious object before them, mansions of perfect bliss, He makes known to them the means of obtaining it. He speaks to them of Himself, of Access to God, and of the true Knowledge of Him. To these points your attention is to be now directed.

I. Our Lord speaks of Himself. ‘Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life.’

‘I am the Way.’—He had spoken to the disciples of mansions in his Father’s house; and here He asserts that He himself is the Way that leads to them. A ‘way’ is a course marked out, and leading to a certain object or end. If any one truly believe in Christ, obey Him, and follow Him, he will arrive at the mansions of bliss, as a traveller who walks in the proper way will arrive at the place which he has in view.

We say to you, and that continually, ‘Behold

the Lamb of God,' and see in Him the way to God and heaven. He has made that all-sufficient 'sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world,' by virtue of which we have confidence towards God. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.' This is the great and consolatory discovery of revelation. We may revolve in our minds the accumulated wisdom of ages: but shall we not gladly turn away from it, and adopt the words of a disciple? 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.' If man asserted that there was a God, Jesus revealed Him. If man reasoned about God, Jesus showed how He was to be approached, and how every blessing was to be obtained. 'Through him,' the only Mediator, 'we have access by one Spirit unto the Father.'

Holiness is essential to our present and eternal welfare; and in reference to this, Jesus is the Way. What virtue did He not exhibit? What duty did He not perform? What is holy conduct but the imitation of Him? We cannot purify our hearts and make our lives holy by our own strength: but He has sent forth the Holy Spirit, to dispel our ignorance, to purify our thoughts and affections, and to fill us with intense desires after universal rectitude of heart and conduct. Every thing that He said and did is connected with holiness; and to receive Him, his word, and his Spirit, is to be holy characters.

We wish to be happy here and hereafter; and Jesus is the Way to happiness. To approach God

in Christ, and to be made holy, is the true happiness of man. Few, however, comparatively speaking, are willing to submit to be justified by faith in Christ, to be sanctified by his word and Spirit, to be governed by his laws, and to follow his example:—few look to Christ as the way to God and blessedness. But the true believer acknowledges himself, with the convictions of his awakened soul, to be in himself a sinful and perishing creature; and he also declares that he looks to the Lord Jesus Christ; to his blood and righteousness and intercession, to his Spirit, laws, and example. He has no confidence in himself, whatever he may be, or whatever he may have done: all his expectations are from Christ.

2. 'And the Truth.' The words of Jesus are truth. He is the Light of the world—the Instructor of men in all things that relate to their salvation. Look to the state of the nations before his Advent; or look on the myriads of mankind who are yet in the darkness of paganism. What did the wisest of the ancient sages know of divine things? Or what is known of them at present by multitudes in India, China, and Africa, and by the deluded votaries of the Arabian impostor? They all are involved in darkness, and enslaved by the grossest superstition. Whatever notions they may have of a great Spirit, or of a Supreme Ruler, they spend their days in darkness, delusion, sin, and misery. Judaism contained a discovery of the true God. The day-star from on high was seen by the descendants of Abraham: but it was seen through the clouds and mists

of carnal ordinances, of types and predictions, as the harbinger of the Sun of righteousness which was to rise upon the nations in a future age. A glorious Deliverer was expected by the believing Jew, but his character was not fully understood. The prospect of the Jew, like that of a traveller in a misty morning, was dim and limited. He knew the true God, but not in the full display of his perfections and counsels. He saw a glory; but there was a veil cast upon it, which was not to be removed until the work of redemption was achieved, and the Spirit of truth and grace sent forth into the world.

But if we consider our own state, our high distinction is this—we possess the Gospel: we behold the blessed Jesus, ‘the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person,’ who ‘when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.’ The light and glory with which we are surrounded is clear and abundant: and how can we contemplate it without admiration and gratitude! Every subject connected with our spiritual welfare is put before us with sufficient plainness. We know the true God in his attributes, counsels, and proceedings: we know ourselves, our origin, nature, history, circumstances, and destiny: we know the means of obtaining the favour of God and eternal happiness. That the Scriptures are a revelation of truth, is proved by the facts of history, the deductions of reason, the convictions of conscience, and by the experience of the pious in all ages. The scholar

may study the subject in retirement with the aids of learning, and the unlettered Christian reads, hears, prays, believes, and has the witness in himself: both agree in this, the one speculatively and the other experimentally, that Jesus Christ is 'the Truth.'

3. 'And the Life.' Christ is our life—the life and happiness of our souls, both in this world and in the future. The spiritual life of the true believer is derived from Him, the Head of vital influence. 'Dead in trespasses and sins' is the description of all who are without Him. They have no feeling apprehension of divine things, and are dull, careless, and indifferent respecting them. They do not see the deformity of sin, or feel it to be an intolerable burden: nor do they anticipate its consequences with any emotion of alarm or dismay. They are the victims of insensibility and apathy. But the expression, 'Alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord,' describes the happy state of the truly pious. They possess, through divine grace, those principles and affections which constitute the life and the kingdom of God in the soul of man. They view sin, and they are humble, contrite, and self-abased. They look unto Jesus, and they trust in Him, and love Him. They direct their thoughts to heaven and eternity, and they hope and rejoice. There is in them an inward conflict between good and evil, between a carnal nature and divine grace: but they delight in holiness, and aspire continually after higher attainments in universal piety. And whence does this proceed, and what does it prove?

It proceeds from their participation of Christ ; and it proves that He is their life. Enduring patiently and faithfully to the end, the incipient and the progressive work of the Spirit, of which they are the subjects, shall be perfected in everlasting life in the world of glory. If we are looking forward to eternity with a well-grounded hope of happiness, what is the foundation of it ? Is it not the gracious declaration of our Lord, ‘ Because I live, ye shall live also ? ’ ‘ Justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,’ sanctified by the Spirit and by the word of truth, and ‘ kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation,’ we live ; and though the outward man decays, and goes down to the grave, yet it shall be raised at the appointed hour ; for He who is ‘ the Resurrection and the Life’ shall ‘ change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body : ’ and He will then receive his people into the mansions which He is preparing for them. In all respects, therefore, is Jesus our Life. But,

II. We consider what our Lord asserts respecting access to God through Him. ‘ No man cometh unto the Father but by me.’ Our happiness depends on our coming to the Father : but the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Mediator between Him and us : and our state, nature, and character are such, that we cannot possibly come to Him acceptably and availingly by any other means. He is the way, and the only way to God ; so that no one can come to God, to the salvation of his soul, but by this true and living way.

We may boast of what we call wisdom, power, and virtue; and we may place great reliance in them. But as to our justification before God, we must wholly renounce ourselves—all our powers and performances. We are lost sinners, and as such we must come to God; not to declare what we fancy ourselves to be, but what we want; not to enumerate our virtues, but to lament our sins; not to claim rewards, but to receive gifts. ‘Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.’ ‘The law made nothing perfect; but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.’ To draw nigh to Him as children, enjoying his favour, accepted by Him in our persons and services, and having fellowship with Him, is that which constitutes our real happiness as spiritual and immortal beings. But we maintain that no one, in any circumstances, or in any period of life, can approach Him by any other name than that which the gospel reveals. The words of our Lord are so explicit and decisive, that they admit of no modification—of no exception. Whether we view the contrite penitent, or the established believer, the case is precisely the same.

We may, indeed, approach God in a certain manner without any reference to the only Mediator. We may approach Him, as we think, in our speculations as sages, in our imaginations as poets, or in our virtue as moralists. We may rush into his

presence, and present ourselves before Him without any right thought or feeling either of Him or of ourselves : and we may conclude that we are approved, and that nothing more is required of us. If we have cultivated minds, and something of vivid fancy, we may call forth our stores of learning, the powers of language, and the most select images ; and we may then expatiate on the Deity with splendour and taste : and there is something peculiarly fascinating to some minds in this mental process. They are charmed with a piety that is noble in thought, eloquent in expression, and refined in feeling—philosophical and rational. But is this a real approach to God ? Is it not rather a dream, however pleasing, about Deity ? But we pass from this splendid inanity of the accomplished intellect, and from the arrogant claims of the mere moralist ; and we assert, that to approach God beneficially to our souls, is to approach Him under a deep sense of his glorious perfections, and of our own sinfulness and guilt ; not as angels, to admire Him, but as offenders seeking pardon, and as mendicants asking every blessing in the name of Christ. God in Christ is the God of the Scriptures : and if we do not approach Him, in Christ, we in fact do not approach Him at all : we only render homage to a Being whom we have fashioned according to our own devices ; whom we invest with what attributes we please, delineate in whatever phraseology we may select, and regard in whatever manner we choose. And what benefit do we receive from our services to this imaginary Being ? We elevate and

expand our minds, gratify our taste, and recreate ourselves for a season with a species of undefinable mystical delight. But what we, lost and helpless creatures, want, is the positive communication of mercy and grace; of pardon, strength, and comfort. What we want is, such a removal of evil and bestowment of good as makes us more and more like God, and fits us to be with Him for ever. No man, however, can so approach God as to receive these inestimable blessings from Him but by Christ.

Those, then, who approach God without regarding the only Mediator, do not approach Him truly and effectually. Nor do those, we add, so approach Him, who merely admit in a cold and speculative manner that Christ is the way to the Father, and merely conclude their prayers with his name. The important questions to be asked are such as these: What are our spiritual apprehensions of the glorious God? What are the views which we entertain of ourselves? What, as to these things, are the feelings and convictions of our hearts? Unless we reflect on God's holiness and justice, as well as on his love and mercy; unless we know and feel that we are sinful and lost creatures; unless we see in the light of Scripture that God is accessible to us only through our great High Priest; and unless we do thus approach Him with humility and contrition, with faith and gratitude, we do not approach Him in a manner that is acceptable to Him, or profitable to ourselves. A wrong frame of mind and heart will make even the best and most correct

SERMON VIII.

language an empty sound, and our worship, whether fanciful or formal, altogether fruitless.

Does any one feel inclined to ask, How can I come unto the Father? How can I approach God? The assertion of our Lord is the only reply: 'No man cometh unto the Father but by me.' And here we would say, Never be satisfied with your state until you feel that you renounce yourselves, and have in your souls a most simple and entire dependence on Christ as the only hope of man. Seek right views, principles, and affections. We have, under the Gospel, 'boldness to enter into the holiest' but it is not by any thing in ourselves—it is 'by the blood of Jesus.' It is our privilege to 'draw near' to God: but we must draw near to Him 'with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.' In all our approaches to Him, it is essential that we remember his adorable perfections, our own state and character, and the place which our blessed Lord occupies in the economy of redeeming love.

We are reluctant to quit this part of our subject, because of its infinite importance to every one of you.—An inconceivable variety of moral character exists among men. If some are notorious in vice and profligacy, yet others are benevolent, amiable, and correct in moral conduct. But 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.' All are corrupt, weak, and guilty before Him. All are by nature lost creatures. Of the flagrantly vicious we need not speak: but the most virtuous will own, when divine light is poured upon their souls, that

their sins are numberless : and when they consider their hearts and lives, the evil they have done, and the duties they have omitted, they will adopt the prayer of the Publican, ‘ God be merciful to me a sinner.’ In vain shall any one look to himself, and hope, on the ground of what he has been, or is, of what he has done, or can do, to be accepted of God. A universal self-renunciation, and an unreserved trust in Christ, are the essential points. All men may come to God : but no one whatever can come to Him except by Christ as the way—as the Mediator and Intercessor. And let it be faithfully considered by all, that the state of man here as good or bad, and the condition of man hereafter as happy or miserable, entirely depend on his coming or not coming to the Father by Him who is ‘ the way, and the truth, and the life.’

III. We consider, lastly, what our blessed Lord says about the right knowledge of God. ‘ If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also : and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.’ From these remarkable assertions we infer, that if we have the true knowledge of Christ, we have also the true knowledge of God.


We only observe here, as the subject will be resumed, that there is a wide difference between our saving knowledge of God as true believers, and our speculative knowledge as intelligent beings ; that is, between our knowledge of Him as a reconciled Father, and our knowledge of Him as the Creator and universal Ruler ;—between our knowledge of Him as God in Christ, and our fancies about Him

out of Christ. Sages and savages, metaphysical philosophers and raptured poets, can speak more or less about an uncreated, infinite, and omnipotent Spirit. Christian sentimentalists may talk of seeing God in the sun or in the flower; of hearing Him in the thunder or in the breeze. We do admire a piety that sheds a sacredness on visible objects, and makes them the occasion of hallowed thoughts: but when mere reason and the visible creation are made primary instructors, instead of helpers, we maintain that God, with regard to salvation, is to such persons, however they may value their thoughts and feelings, 'The unknown God.'

The God of the Bible is the God of Christians: and the God of the Bible is God in Christ Jesus. 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' If, then, we know Christ by the teaching of his word and of his Spirit, we know God: for the perfections and the counsels of God, as far as they can be known by us in the present state, are revealed in and by Him. To be ignorant of Christ, is to be ignorant of God; for God is revealed only in Him and by Him as the God of our salvation. 'Neither,' said our Lord, 'knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.' Christ, therefore, is both the way to the Father, and the revealer of Him: and to know Him, to the life and health, to the peace, joy, and triumph of our souls, is to know Him as He is revealed in and by Christ. 'We

know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true : and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.' Such was the confidence of the beloved disciple : and may we not only understand his words, but also be enabled to adopt them as our own.

In this manner, then, our blessed Lord unfolded to his disciples some of the great truths of his kingdom : and these truths are of deep, universal, and perpetual interest. Let every one, therefore, faithfully examine himself ;—' Do I know Jesus as the way, and the truth, and the life ? Do I know God as He is revealed in Him and in his Gospel ? Do I humbly, spiritually, and thankfully approach God in and by Him ? Is Christ to me the way to God and heaven ; the light of my mind, and the life and happiness of my soul ?' Propose, we beseech you, such plain questions to yourselves. These are not matters of curious speculation which you may regard or disregard at your own pleasure : for as long as you continue unable to enter into them with a feeling spirit, you are strangers to the real nature of our holy faith. If such be your present state, we intreat you to waste no more of a short and uncertain life in error, delusion, and vanity. The Gospel unfolds to you everlasting mansions, and it reveals to you the only way by which you can obtain them. Be diligent and earnest, therefore, in attending to your salvation : and pray that you may know Christ, and God in Him and through



Him, so that you may enjoy real piety here, and perfect blessedness and glory hereafter.

Are there any among you who are spiritually acquainted with the subjects of which we have been speaking? We call upon you to 'rejoice in the Lord alway,' and to be unfeignedly thankful for the inestimable benefits which have been conferred upon you. But, since you are in a dangerous world, beware of every thing which may in any manner corrupt your faith. Cleave to Christ, and to God in Him, with steadfast hearts; and carefully order your whole conversation as those who know Him who is 'the way, and the truth, and the life;'—as those who are looking to an inheritance in the world of bliss;—as those who trust entirely in the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, and who are anxious and diligent, as it becomes his children and servants, to promote his glory and the best interests of your fellow creatures in your day and generation.

SERMON IX.

Christ in the Father, and the Father in Christ.

ST. JOHN, xiv. 8, 9, 10, 11.

Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.


IN endeavouring to 'declare unto you the whole counsel of God,' we are often led to the consideration of subjects which are far above our comprehension. All the truths of Scripture demand our serious study; but many of them are of a high order; and while they teach us that God is great, they also teach us that man is ignorant. In the verses before us at present, we are led to reflect on the union of the Father and of the Son; a doctrine clearly revealed to us as a fact: but it is one of the 'deep things of God:' and our duty is to receive it

with humble and joyful submission, on the testimony of the inspired record, and not to dispute about it in an unprofitable manner. There are in the Scriptures what we call mysteries—truths which cannot be grasped and unfolded by our feeble faculties: and we do not find on the sacred pages any disputation about them, or explanation of them. Our Lord here asserts a certain fact, and gives the proof of the fact; but He does not explain how the fact is: He leaves us, as to this high subject, to walk by faith and not by sight. And it may be observed, that the bold and acute scrutiny, and the figurative illustrations, of inexplicable matters, in which some persons have indulged themselves, are as unprofitable as they are hazardous. They add nothing to our knowledge, and are more calculated to obstruct than to promote our edification in true godliness. We should approach such topics with reverence; examine them on their own ground, and in their own language; and devoutly improve them for the purposes of faith and practice: then, indeed, our meditations on the highest things of revelation will be largely advantageous to us.

Our blessed Lord had said to his disciples, ‘If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.’ We see in the text how the disciples received his declaration. Philip evidently spoke his own sentiments, and those of the rest. We admire his reverence for Christ, whom he calls Lord; his acknowledgment of Christ’s ability to

show them the Father; his admission that the knowledge of the Father was sufficient to satisfy the soul of man; his modesty in not contradicting our Lord, but only seeking that which he felt that he wanted; and his love for his fellow disciples, in whose name he spoke, and for whom he sought that blessedness which he himself was anxious to obtain.—But we proceed to consider the Request of the disciple, and the Reply of our Lord.

I. The Request of the disciple. ‘Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us,’—It would seem that he was desirous of beholding some visible appearance of the Father; not that he believed his essence to be corporeal and visible; but he knew that God had often caused his glory to be seen by the fathers by some symbolical appearance. Such was the sight of Himself which He granted to the Israelites on mount Sinai: and Abraham, many of the prophets, and especially Moses, were favoured with a sight of Him of this kind. The request of Philip was very similar to that of Moses, recorded in Exodus, xxxiii. 18; and the fulfilment of it is asked of Jesus, because the prophets (as in Is. xl. 5.) had united an illustrious appearance of God with the advent of Messiah;—because He had used the expressions of seeing God, of seeing the glory of God;—because no one of the disciples could have any doubt respecting his familiar intercourse with the Father;—and because the voice of the Father had been heard more than once bearing testimony of our Lord, and recently, (chap. xii. 28.) in reply to his petition,



‘Father, glorify thy name.’ From thoughts of this sort the apostle might have formed the notion, that it was not difficult for our Lord to procure for them some visible manifestation of Him whose voice they had heard. Philip urges his request by this argument, ‘And it sufficeth us,’ It is as though he had said, ‘It will give us a knowledge of the Father, establish our faith in Thee, and comfort our hearts in all temptations and trials.’ It is impossible for us to decide what the thoughts and feelings of Philip were; but the preceding statement may be correct on the whole. If we were to give to his request more of spirituality and of true piety, it might be questioned whether we did not ascribe to him those attainments in interior goodness which he had not yet made: but on this point we cannot speak in decisive terms.


Let us, however, consider the request of Philip as a source of reflection for our own spiritual benefit. The knowledge of God is indeed the sum of knowledge: and, if we attach proper ideas to the words, we may use the petition, ‘Lord, show us the Father.’ The true discovery of God to the soul, the spiritual knowledge of Him according to the Scriptures, is that which sufficeth to comfort us, to satisfy us, to make us happy. If the means of this discovery be granted us, and this is the case, it is alike our duty and interest to use them, and to give ourselves no rest until the discovery is made.

What was the request of Moses in a trying moment of his life? ‘And he said, I beseech thee,

show me thy glory.' He knew that he could sustain the heaviest burden and the most severe trials if he could direct his mind to the contemplation of God, as one with whose adorable perfections he was intimately acquainted. His request was not fruitless. Though he was not permitted to see the divine 'glory,' yet a manifestation of the divine 'goodness' was granted to him. 'And he said, I will make all my goodness to pass before thee, and I will proclaim the Name of the Lord before thee.' See Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

In Moses and in Philip we have examples for our imitation. The former under the old dispensation, and the latter at the commencement of the new, prefer similar requests: 'Show me thy glory:' 'Show us the Father:' and in each case we see the divine condescension: the Name of the Lord was proclaimed to the one, and the other was favoured with distinct instructions.

Our true happiness consists in the knowledge of God: but that knowledge is not composed of natural ideas and reflections; it is a discovery—a discovery not made by subtle reasonings, but by serious study of Scripture and earnest and persevering prayer. If we use these means, we shall obtain what we seek. Our minds will be enlightened, and have a spiritual apprehension of God. Christians in general presume that they know Him, because they admit his existence, and have some notions about Him. They forget that the true knowledge of God is a revelation of Him to the soul, according to the gospel, and by the Spirit of



Christ. They own that God is the chief good, for it is the dictate of reason : but mid their knowledge, they are in darkness ; and, whatever pleasures they enjoy, they have no satisfaction. The cause of this is obvious. They are strangers to those petitions, ‘ Show me thy glory ;’ ‘ Show us the Father.’

We advocate nothing fanciful, wild, or mystical : but we maintain, that true piety implies an effectual manifestation of God to the soul ; so that the soul in the light of the written word and by the agency of the Spirit of truth, obtains just apprehensions of Jehovah, with all holy affections towards Him. We urge you to seek this divine illumination. Remember Moses ; remember Philip : and let your petitions be, ‘ Grant us, O Saviour, by thy word and Spirit the true knowledge of the Father, and increase this knowledge in us ever more and more.’

II. The Reply of our Lord to the inquiring disciple is now to be considered. And here we have,

1. The truth, or fact, which our Lord asserts. ‘ Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip ? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father ; and how sayest thou, Show us the Father ? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me ?’ These questions are the language of kind address, affecting reproof, and positive instruction. The great truth which our Lord advances is this, ‘ I am in the Father, and the Father in me :’ consequently, ‘ He that

hath seen me, hath seen the Father also.' He had formerly said, chap. x. 30, 'I and my Father are one : ' and in ver. 38, 'That ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.' And in chap. xii. 45, 'And he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me.' We read in the Epistles, that Christ was 'in the form of God,' and 'thought it not robbery to be equal with God;' that He is 'the brightness of his' Father's 'glory, and the express image of his person;' that 'in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;' and that 'this is the true God, and eternal life.' What, therefore, our Lord asserts is, His own personal Deity. The Father is so in Him, and He is so in the Father, that the Father and He are one. Whatever distinction subsists between the persons in the one Jehovah, the essential nature of them is the same: the Father and the Son, therefore, are one; and he who knows the Son knows also the Father.

The truth, or fact, as we have already remarked, is asserted by our Lord, but it is not explained: and our attempting to unfold a matter left in such darkness, and so far beyond the reach of our faculties at present, is altogether presumptuous. But incomprehensible as this truth is, it lies at the foundation of our faith: for the Godhead of the Son being denied, revelation is deprived of its glory, has no basis, and sinks into ruin. Our hopes as Christians are vain; and we are left to rove in the cheerless wilds of deism. But, whatever be the perverse reasonings of the proud, the ignorant, and the vain, the humble Christian will

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firmly cleave to the divine revelation. He will receive its mysteries as mysteries, with meekness and gratitude; and will at all times be more anxious to improve them than to speculate about them.

We never act more wisely, in the examination of Christian mysteries, than when we confine ourselves to the words of Scripture. With regard to the subject before us, it is sufficient to say respecting our Lord, that He is in the Father, and the Father in Him. No human comment can throw any light upon the subject. God has revealed Himself in the manner and measure in which it pleased Him to do it. We thankfully and adoringly acknowledge, that we see God in Christ, 'The Word was with God, and the Word was God;' 'And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.' Here we stand upon a rock that cannot be moved; upon a foundation for a hope which will never make those ashamed who build upon it. —But in our Lord's reply, we have

2. The proofs of the truth or fact which He asserted. And,

i. The first proof is, his own declaration. 'Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me.' In other words, 'I assert this great fact; and I call upon you to credit my words, and to receive them, as conveying to you a most unquestionable truth, because they are my declaration to you.' The disciples had intimately conversed with our Lord, and were competent judges of his veracity: they had never detected Him in any false-

hood: and was it possible for Him to deviate on the present occasion from his invariable integrity, and to inculcate a doctrine that was untrue? Further, they acknowledged Him to be the Messiah, the Son of God; and persons who had this persuasion ought to be satisfied of the truth of his assertions on the authority of his own word.

The argument applies to us; for if we find, by the consideration of facts, that the Lord Jesus is entitled to credit, we act reasonably in believing what He said in any particular case on the ground that He did say it. The mysteriousness of what He said will not diminish our confidence in its truth, but rather increase it; because it may be presumed, that a mysterious truth would not be advanced without the greatest deliberation. We have the history of his life; we can examine his words and actions on various occasions; and the more closely we investigate them, the more fully shall we be convinced of the perfect truth and honesty which stamped his character. We find nothing that can justify the slightest suspicion. When, therefore, He commands us, 'Believe in me,' we know that He deserves the fullest credit. But,

ii. He refers to his doctrine as a proof of his great position. 'The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself.' He repeatedly spoke of his doctrine as not being his own, but from God. Thus in chap. xii. 49, 50, 'For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me commandment, what I should say, and what I

should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, as the Father said unto me, so I speak.'

Whether we consider what our Lord taught, or the manner in which He taught, we have strong evidence of his Godhead. With regard to Moses, we may observe, that he speaks with holy awe as a man,—a teacher appointed of God: but Christ speaks with a freedom, ease, and familiarity all his own. He dwells on the highest topics without the slightest hesitation, and speaks of God as of one with whom He was most intimate. The discoveries of Moses were in many respects partial and shadowy: those of Christ were universal and substantial; in many respects ultimate, and in all respects the bright and sacred outlines of the great scheme of redemption. Moses spoke as one who had received a certain measure of truth which he was to communicate to one people: but Christ spoke as one who knew the truth in its full extent, and who unfolded it for all nations and generations of men. Moses rises with a noble effort into the sphere of contemplation, and inculcates a few truths: but Christ descends, as it were from an eminence, and speaks as one who knew the whole counsel of God. Moses was eminent as a lawgiver and a prophet, but we always recognise in him the man: but in Christ we recognise more than man, the bright beamings of attempered Deity shining forth through his pure humanity. He was 'God manifest in the flesh.'

If we glance at the words of Christ, at the doc-

trines which he taught, we may notice his revelation of God; his development of our nature and state; his discovery of the way of life by faith in Himself; his instructions respecting the Holy Spirit; his disclosure of the future—of the resurrection, of the final judgment, of heaven and hell: and here are doctrines which are sublime, glorious, and awful; gracious, holy, consolatory, and delightful; consonant with, and manifestative of the attributes of God as a merciful Father and righteous Governor; and also adapted to the whole constitution of man, meeting his wants, exciting his fears, and encouraging his hopes. Who could have promulged such doctrines, and promulge them with such majesty, simplicity, and confidence as our Lord did? Suppose an inspired mortal had taught some of them, yet neither he, nor the highest angel, could have used the language which our Lord used, or made the assertions which He made. His words were, indeed, those of a delegate, but not of a created delegate: and, therefore, we can only rest in this, that He was in the Father, and the Father in Him.

iii. But our Lord refers also to his works. ‘The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.’ ‘Believe me for the very works’ sake.’ He spoke thus to the Jews, chap. x. 25, ‘The works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me:’ and in ver. 37, 38, ‘If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I

in him.' If we consider his miracles, we may observe, that there is a wide difference between them and those wrought by Moses and the prophets. At his will and word evil spirits were ejected, the elements controlled, multitudes fed, diseases cured, and the dead restored to life. These works were performed to prove that He was the Messiah, the predicted Deliverer of mankind: and, accordingly, He did not perform them as a man, but as one who possessed the attributes of Deity,—who knew all hearts, and had the material and spiritual world subject to his power and authority. They proved, not merely that He was sent from God, but that He was God—that He was in the Father, and the Father in Him.


Such is the proof which our Lord adduces of the truth of his assertion, that He was in the Father, and the Father in Him, and, consequently, that he who hath seen Christ hath seen the Father also. We are not required to believe such an assertion without proof: and therefore the only question now is this, Is the proof solid, satisfactory, convincing? If we examine our Lord's character, we find Him to be worthy of all credit: and if we examine his doctrine and his works, both in themselves, and in the manner in which the former were taught and the latter were performed, we conclude that Christ is God as well as man. To accuse Him of falsehood on any point, is as groundless and absurd as it is impious: and to say that any created being whatever could have taught what He did, and as He did, or could have wrought such mira-

cles, and as He wrought them, is to say what is absolutely incredible, and altogether revolting to our common reason.

Thus our Lord gave the evidence for the truth of the doctrine which he advanced; and that evidence must be sufficient to convince us of its truth; for otherwise we make Him guilty of mockery, in appealing to our reason, and yet not meeting its demands. The evidence which we have is such as He saw proper to give: and if, on any pretext whatever, we reject the doctrine, it will be impossible for us to defend our conduct before Him, when He shall appear as our Judge, whatever we may now say among men in the pride and vanity of our minds.

We conclude the discourse with a few practical remarks.

1. It becomes us to be thankful for that revelation of God which is granted to us. We do not want the masters of learning to inform us who He is, or where He is to be found, or how He is to be approached, or by what means his favour is to be obtained. We behold Him in the gospel: 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.' The inspired record is in our hands: and it is no diminution of its excellence and value, that it does not give us full information on all subjects, and that it leaves some in such a state that we cannot by any means comprehend them at present.



This circumstance only leads us to pleasing anticipations of our future condition, when our enlarged and purified faculties will make us familiar with the high matters of the spiritual world. Let us while upon earth be believers, and not disputants; humble and teachable children, not haughty and captious speculators. We cannot know all things: but we can know, scripturally and savingly, that Christ is in the Father, and the Father in Him; and, knowing this, we may well wait, with patience and with happy feelings, until the darkness which is connected with mortality shall have past away for ever. But,

2. Let us not rest satisfied with outward privileges, but seek the true knowledge of God. We cannot doubt, on the slightest reflection, that the spiritual knowledge of God in Christ Jesus forms the real happiness of man's soul: so that without this, no one can be happy; and with this no one can be miserable. We attach all due importance to a sound scriptural creed; to correct speculative attainments: for the purity of our views is immediately connected with the purity of our piety; since truth is the parent of excellence, and all error is more or less productive of mischief. It is no small thing to be wisely instructed in the Scriptures, so as to reject every form of sophistry and error, and to hold the truth with as little admixture as possible, although there be in all this nothing more than a work and state of mere intellect. But still this intellectual rectitude will not of itself save the

soul. The light of truth is essential ; but its life, spirit, power, and energy are also essential. Seek the knowledge of God in Christ ; but never be contented with any other knowledge of Him than that which, while it enlightens the eyes, converts the soul, rejoices the heart, and makes man, spiritually and practically, a follower of the holy Jesus. And further,

3. It becomes us to consider who Christ is, and what is required of us with regard to Him. He is in the Father, and the Father is in Him. With bold and perplexing inquiries we have no concern: the practical use of the subject is what demands our constant attention. In what manner, then, are we to regard this glorious Saviour ? What, as to this point, is the divine will ? It is, ‘that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.’ Such as our views of Him are, such in a great measure will be the real character of our spiritual and practical piety. In other words, If we have lofty views of the adorable Emmanuel, we shall trust in Him with unshaken confidence, love Him in sincerity, rejoice in Him in truth, obey and follow Him with promptitude, exactness, and perseverance, and magnify Him with grateful hearts. And truly our thoughts upon earth respecting our blessed Lord are more correct, as they approach nearer to those which are entertained of Him by the hosts above : and their language is, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and

glory, and blessing.' Be it, then, our study and prayer that we may think of our Saviour as those exalted beings think of Him, and that we may here adopt their language with spiritual conviction. One who is so great and glorious, One who is good and gracious, One in whom the Father is well pleased, One whom all the angels of God worship, is fully entitled to our purest affections and adoring homage: and greatly, indeed, need we to question our piety if Jesus be not the centre to whom we look, the rock upon which we stand, and the Name which we delight to magnify. But, lastly,

4. Let us remember, that the true knowledge of Christ, and of God in Him, cannot be obtained by our unaided powers. We may confute error, or establish truth, by learning, reason, and argument. We may proceed, by the mere force of our mental faculties, in a chain of reasoning, until we arrive at the most important conclusions respecting Christ, his redeeming work, and his spiritual kingdom: but after our intellectual labour is closed, we may be entirely ignorant, as to all saving effects, of the real nature of those subjects which we have so elaborately discussed: for 'No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.' We are, undoubtedly, to exert ourselves, and to use our means of grace; but we are also to bear in mind, that our best exertions and our choicest means of grace are ineffectual without the agency from above. Exert yourselves to the utmost: but be diligent and fervent in prayer for the influences

Christ in the Father, and the Father in Christ. 139

of the promised Comforter; for thus, and only thus, will you be led into the saving knowledge of God in Christ: and your faith in Him, and your love of Him, and your subjection to Him in heart and conduct, will then be such that you will glorify Him here, and, when you leave the dim and perplexing sojourn of mortality, you will be glorified with Him for evermore.

SERMON X.

Peculiar Promises to the Disciples.

ST. JOHN, xiv. 12, 13, 14.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also ; and greater works than these shall he do ; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

IN the interpretation of Scripture it is frequently of great importance to consider both its primary and secondary intention ; its original and restricted, and its perpetual and universal application. If we confine ourselves to the former, our interpretation may be such as is uninteresting to ourselves ; but yet if we disregard it, our deductions may be arbitrary, fanciful, unsound, and untenable. The Bible was at first addressed, in its several parts, to particular bodies of men, or to individuals, with reference to the then-existing circumstances : but it was also designed for the benefit of all men of all nations and ages. Our business, therefore, is to ascertain and determine, as far as we can, the primary meaning of a passage : and then our deductions

from it must be such as it warrants when it is thus really understood.

Our blessed Lord, in the chapters which we are examining, was conversing with his disciples; and what He advanced had an immediate reference to them. But his discourse with them was designed to promote the edification of the Church to the end of time. We must, then, in order to understand the discourse, ascertain both its immediate and its perpetual application.—We proceed, therefore, to examine our text in its reference to the disciples, and then to deduce those truths from it which it furnishes for our instruction and edification.

I. We consider these verses in their reference to the disciples.—They were to be teachers of the gospel in different nations after our Lord's ascension. Their duties would be arduous, and frequently attended with danger and difficulty: and no ordinary encouragement and consolation were necessary to support them under the bereavement which they were about to sustain, and to prepare them for the service in which they were to be employed. Our Lord, accordingly, adapted his discourse to their circumstances. If He had matters to advance which were painful to their feelings, yet He had matters also to advance of the most pleasing and elevating kind. For,


1. Let us reflect on his promise to them respecting their works. 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he

do ; because I go unto my Father.' Our Lord here refers in an especial manner to the disciples : but the general expression which He uses, ' He that believeth in me,' shows that He does not speak of them only. His words, however, are to be restricted, we apprehend, in their primary meaning, to the first teachers of the gospel. He promises them, that they should perform the same works that He had wrought, and works which in some sense were greater than His.

With regard to our Lord's works, as here mentioned, we can look only to his teaching and to his miracles : for it need not be said, that none of his followers could exceed him in the holiness of his life, since He was without sin—an example of all perfection. Confining, therefore, our attention to his official character, as a teacher of truth and a worker of miracles ; we know that, as to the former point, He taught with power and authority, and spake as never man spake : and again, as to the latter point, if we merely contemplate his miracles in themselves, it will not be easy to discover how He can be subordinated to his followers. As a Prophet and Teacher, his views of divine truth were in the highest degree extensive and sublime, sound and deep ; his knowledge of the human heart was penetrating and exact ; his doctrines and his laws were gracious, consolatory, and holy ; his spirit was calm, dignified, and affectionate ; his arguments were resistless ; his parables were as striking and beautiful as they were profound and instructive. In short, we cannot conceive any thing more

perfect, when we consider his design, and the nature and condition of man in all ages, than his teaching was. If, further, we advert to his miracles, what an astonishing display do we see in them, not only of power, but of goodness! They were equally stupendous and gracious. They were various and undeniable; so that his adversaries were compelled to acknowledge their truth. How, then, it may be asked, could any works be greater than His?

Our Lord, however, solemnly declares, that his disciples should do the same works that He did, and even greater. To suppose the expression a mere figure of speech, is preposterous. He was speaking plain truth; and there must be a sense in which his words are literally correct. The disciples taught, and they also wrought miracles. We might compare the miracles of our Lord and theirs; but we do not conceive that this would lead us to conclude, that theirs were greater than his, in the common sense of the word. Nor do we suppose that any one who compares our Lord and his disciples as teachers, would be disposed to say, that they were superior to Him. We must, therefore, view the word 'greater' as describing the works not merely in themselves, but also in connection with their effects and results. If we consider the short period of our Lord's ministry, and the limited sphere of his labours, and the comparatively small success of his preaching and miracles; and if we put in contrast with this the far longer ministry of the greater part of the disciples, and the wide field of the Gentile world that was opened to them, and



the large success that attended their labours ; we may say, that they did the works which He did, and even greater works. He preached the doctrines of his kingdom : but it was allotted them to make, after they had received the Holy Ghost, the full development of the gracious scheme of redemption. He laid the foundations of the spiritual edifice : it was theirs to raise the superstructure. It was thus that peculiar honour was put upon the disciples : and they, feeble and dependent mortals in themselves, were enabled, by the agency of the promised Spirit, to do greater works than Christ himself did. But,

2. We reflect on our Lord's promise with regard to prayer. ' And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.'—Here the disciples are assured by our Lord, that they should receive, in answer to their prayers, whatever they might ask for in his Name, or looking to Him as the all-prevailing Intercessor. Thus the Father was to be glorified in the Son ; or his glory, his adorable perfections, would be made known, be acknowledged, honoured, and celebrated by mankind. This promise is expressed in general terms ; but as to its primary bearing, we would limit it to the disciples and early believers, and to them also with an immediate reference to the promulgation of the Gospel. Its teachers would be often placed in trying circumstances, and might not know how to act : but this promise would afford them comfort in all their

exigencies. Asking in the name of Christ, and with full submission to the divine will ; asking what promoted the glory of God and the benefit of the Church ; they would not ask in vain ; their prayers would be answered—their petitions granted. If we refer to the Acts of the Apostles, we shall see how the promise of our Lord was fulfilled. For instance, in the fourth chapter we have a prayer of the Apostles ; and then we are expressly informed, that ‘when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together ; and they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.’ Again, in the twelfth chapter we read that Peter ‘was kept in prison ; but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.’ The result was, that he obtained deliverance by the interposition of an angel, who was sent to effect it. Thus we see the primary meaning of the promise,—its reference to the first preachers and converts of the gospel : for the latter, believing in Christ, were favoured, as well as the Apostles, with peculiar privileges, and supported by appropriate helps and encouragements. And thus, notwithstanding the malice and violence of adversaries, they were to succeed in bringing Jews and Gentiles to the acknowledgment of God in Christ Jesus. The history of the primitive Church gives ample testimony to the fact, that the disciples and other teachers were heard and answered when they prayed in the name of the only Mediator and Intercessor.

Our Lord had mentioned to the disciples his approaching departure from them—‘Yet a little while

I am with you :’ but He had also observed, ‘ I go to prepare a place for you :’ and now, making a further discovery of truth, He tells them whither He went ; ‘ Because I go unto my Father.’ Their success after his ascension, and the answers granted to their prayers, afforded them, as they afford us, a full proof that He ‘ came from God and went to God,’—a full proof of his Messiahship—of the perfection of his redeeming work—and of the prevalence of his intercession. The disciples were thus informed of the fact, that our Lord went to his Father ; a fact which was to be productive of those stupendous results which would prove its truth, and establish the faith of believers in all ages.

We may here observe that such an appropriate provision for peculiar circumstances displays the wisdom and goodness of God, who, executing his purposes by the instrumentality of means, confers his blessings on the agents whom He employs, qualifies them for their work, and supports them in it. With regard to the propagation of the gospel, there was no proportion between the visible means and the end : for what could a few obscure inhabitants of Judea effect in opposition to the wisdom and power, the prejudices and profligacy of a world set in array against them ? But these men were made competent for the high and blest achievement by especial endowments. In their success we see the finger of God, and the clearest proof of the divine origin of our holy faith. The assurances of our Lord to his disciples may be viewed as so many predictions ; and their fulfilment shows that the

Gospel is a revelation from God, and therefore worthy of all acceptance.

II. But we consider our text with respect to those truths of a general nature which we may deduce from it. And here,

1. We notice the character of which our Lord speaks: 'He that believeth on me.' The indefiniteness of the expression justifies us in giving it an extensive meaning. Every true Christian is one that believeth on Him: and therefore the blessings which were granted to the first believers, proper limitations being made, belong to him. We cannot too frequently remind you, that true faith is the fundamental principle in religion. By it we obtain all blessings from above; and from it proceed all those holy affections and good works by which the real follower of Christ is distinguished amongst mankind. When we truly believe, we not only admit the truth of the Scriptures, but our souls, in all their faculties and powers, are affected by, and act in agreement with, the truths which we admit. Faith is the acknowledgment of truth; but it is more—for it is feeling and acting in full correspondence with that acknowledgment. It is not, therefore, a mere simple exercise of the intellect, but a complex principle, implying the affection of the whole soul according to the truths which are set before it. It will always have one specific object: it will always have a particular reference to Christ: and here we feel the emphasis of our Lord's words, 'He that believeth on me.' It is thus that He describes his true follower. And it is the pri-

vilege and duty of the true believer in Christ to examine the promises of Scripture, to look upon them as his own inheritance, and to expect, in the full assurance of hope, the fulfilment of them on his own behalf.

2. What, then, are the promises which our Lord here makes to believers ?

i. The first promise relates to his own works. ‘The works that I do shall he do also ; and greater works than these shall he do.’ It is evident, that these words can relate to no other persons precisely in the same manner as they related to the first teachers of the gospel. Miracles have long since ceased ; and we are not called to those extraordinary services which require their aid. Our attention is confined to the ordinary labours of the followers of Christ. The sphere of every Christian is a sphere for active exertion ; and however humble it be, it affords him ample room for showing that he remembers our great Example : and it is not unfrequently found that comparatively feeble instruments accomplish great things. It has been remarked on this passage, ‘that whoever promote the work of grace in their own souls and in the souls of others, may be said to do the same works as Christ did ; on account of the analogy which is discovered in the principle—the indwelling Spirit ; and in the effects—in which the like virtues shine forth ; and in the scope or object—the glorification of God by the salvation of a sinner.’

This promise, it may be observed, ought to encourage the Christian Minister. Succeeding the

Apostles in the great work of the edification of the Church, he may hope that the Holy Spirit, in answer to his prayers, will render his labours successful. The aid granted to them and to faithful ministers in all ages, what is miraculous being excepted, is precisely the same in kind, and can only differ in degree. The Spirit who enlightened and renewed benighted and profligate idolaters, is the Spirit who now accompanies the ministration of the truth, and whose influence is seen in the conversion of the ungodly, and in the edification of the pious. Relying upon this blessed Agent, why should the minister be dispirited, or think that he labours in vain?

But when we turn to the latter clause of the promise, 'And greater works than these shall he do,' we hesitate in giving any accommodated view of it. It has been observed on these words, that 'it may be easily conceived in what manner the works of believing individuals are greater than the miracles of Christ. The internal operations of grace are more worthy of admiration than any natural effects; the new creation, than the creation of heaven and earth. The end is greater than the means which lead to it; faith itself, than all miracles. The healing, life, and good of the soul are things of a higher order than any operations on the body. The light of the Spirit in the mind is of far greater account than the removal of blindness. Charity, or love, is preferred to all miraculous gifts.'—The piety and ingenuity of these remarks will not be questioned: but yet we would leave this

part of the promise, on the whole, to its primary application ; and only maintain, that where there is true faith there is ability to do good after the example of our Lord himself. If we act in conformity with our Christian profession, we may be assured that God will honour us, and make us instrumental, more or less, in promoting his glory. The Minister of the truth stands upon a high and peculiar ground ; and, considering the power and promises of his divine Master, let him seek and hope, with submission to the divine will, to be a successful labourer. But the power of a true faith may be largely exemplified in the holy and useful lives of private Christians. To act with diligence, to walk with correctness, to regard the best interests of others, to endure sufferings and trials with patience, to speak with wisdom, and to exhibit a Christian temper on all occasions ;—these are the things to which every Christian is competent, and to which he ought most faithfully to attend : and thus he will promote the very same things which our blessed Redeemer promoted—the glory of God and the salvation of men. In short, as our Lord allotted to the disciples and to the primitive Christians their work, and qualified them for the performance of it, so He now allots to his ministers and to his people their work, and furnishes them with ability to do it. Where true faith exists, the aids of the Holy Spirit will be sought and obtained : the various duties of the Christian life will be discharged, and the various excellencies of the Christian character will be exhibited. Some will do greater works than others : but all will be

workers : and thus the promise has, and will have, a universal and perpetual fulfilment : for all the true followers of Christ will do the works that He did : and in some instances He may qualify instruments to perform works which are, in some respects, greater than his own works were.

ii. The second promise relates to the prayers of true believers : ‘ And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.’ The primary application of this promise has been considered : but we may give it a wider extent of meaning, and adduce the declaration of St. John in his first Epistle as a comment upon it : ‘ And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.’ ‘ And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us : And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.’

The life of every true Christian is in many respects arduous. To be separate from the thoughtless and ungodly ; to be in the world, and yet not of the world ; to deny himself, and lay aside every weight ; to contend with various enemies, and especially with himself ; to perform his religious, relative, and social duties ; to do what good he can in his generation ;—these are not things of easy performance, with whatever readiness we may speak of them, and with whatever zeal we may commend

them. Who is competent to live in a daily and faithful attention to them? No one certainly in his own strength: but we check our desponding thoughts by the recollection of the gracious promise, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do.' Prayer in the name of Christ includes in it a renunciation of our own righteousness, and an entire believing dependence on Christ as our Mediator and all-prevailing Intercessor. Let the believer approach the throne of grace with such prayer; and then, whatever be his indigence and weakness, he will be enriched and strengthened in the inner man. He will be built up in vital and practical godliness: and while he is happy in the experience of his own soul, he will be a blessing to others. Thus the promise in the text leads every believer to Him whose intercession is availing, whose power is infinite, and whose truth is unchangeable: and thus it supplies him with the purest consolation.

Such, then, were the gracious assurances which our Lord gave to his disciples,—resting the fulfilment of them on the reality and prevalence of his intercession: 'Because I go to the Father.' In the world above He would act as the Intercessor; and in the fulfilment of his promise, they would have full proof of the truth of his words and of the efficacy of his mediation. As to the work of our redemption, there were certain things to be transacted upon this earth, and there were likewise certain things to be transacted in the world above. Our Lord, therefore, came from God, dwelt among

us in our own nature, instructed us in the doctrines of his kingdom, and died for us : and then He went to God, where He ever liveth to make intercession for us ; by virtue of which all those blessings are bestowed upon us which are essentially connected with the prosperity of the Church and of its members. And what is the design, and what is the result, of this amazing provision ? The glory of God—we answer : ‘ That the Father may be glorified in the Son.’ Miracles were wrought, and prayers were answered, in order that the knowledge of God, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, might be diffused through the world. Such was the case in the first ages of the Church : and it is by virtue of our Lord’s intercession, and by the efficacy of it, that God has been glorified through past ages, and shall be glorified to the end of time. Christ is our Intercessor in the temple above : and if we understand the gospel, we must clearly see, that all the treasures of wisdom, mercy, and grace are in Him as the Head of his mystical body ; that exertion, prayer, and dependence belong to us in this world ; that it is by faith and devotion that a connection and commerce are kept up between heaven and earth ; and that all the gracious bestowments of spiritual blessings from above, and that all the righteous and prosperous activities below, have one object,—the manifestation and praise of the perfections, counsels, and proceedings of our heavenly Father.

But we hasten to conclude the discourse with a

few sentences addressed to different descriptions of persons.

1. There are among you, we fear, those who yet remain strangers to the real nature of the gospel of Christ : and when we put before you the character of the true believer, the promises of our Lord, the doctrine of his intercession, the efficacy of prayer, and the promotion of the glory of God ; what, we would ask, do you know of these things ? The language in which they are spoken of is familiar to your ears ; but are the things themselves familiar to your souls ? No : they do not form the subjects of your meditation, or awake within you any holy and animated feelings. But in this darkness, dullness, and death of your souls, can you suppose that you are in the number of Christ's true disciples ? Perhaps you cherish some hope of becoming serious Christians at a future time : but we trust that you do not conclude that you are such at present. Serious Christians—partakers of the saving blessings of redemption—heirs of glory—and yet strangers to the operations of faith, to prayer, to the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus, and to the good works of the religious life ! You cannot really suppose for a moment, that in this state you are the people of Christ. And what, then, does it become you to do ? Abandon your deluding thoughts, renounce your vain presumptions, and implore the Father of mercies in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to give you his Holy Spirit, in order that you may be brought to the saving knowledge of divine things.

This you ought to do ; and this you must do, or you will ruin your immortal souls for ever.

2. As to those among you who, through divine grace, know the light and power of the gospel, the subject which we have been considering must inspire your souls with comfort and joy. Behold the Lord Jesus Christ : He is set down at the right hand of God. Listen to his promises : He has fulfilled them, and He is always fulfilling them. With regard to yourselves, He has enabled you to do great things in renouncing the world and sin and Satan, and in embracing the truth. He has heard and answered your prayers. He has strengthened you to persevere to the present hour in the way of life. He has, perhaps, made you more or less instrumental in promoting the glory of God in the world. He has been, He is, and He will always be with his Church. What He has hitherto done, He will continue to do—perfecting that which concerneth you. Be it your care, that your life be a life of faith : and pray in faith for the fulfilment of his promises. As your faith is, so shall it be done unto you. Your difficulties may be many, but your encouragements are great. Your resources are adequate to your wants. ‘ Pray without ceasing : ’ and let your prayer be earnest and sincere—a real communion with God. You will then prosper in your souls ; enjoy a pure and exalted happiness ; and be successful, in different measures, in promoting the best interests of others. Never think that these are small things : for nothing is small, nothing insignificant, which is connected with God, and

Christ, and souls, and eternity. Acting in this manner, the great end of the everlasting Gospel will be answered in you and by you: God will be glorified in his Son. And after having glorified Him in the light of revealed truth, you will ere long be advanced to that blissful state where you will glorify Him, amidst the unnumbered host of the redeemed, in the immediate vision of infinite perfection through an unchanging eternity.

SERMON XI.

The Promise of another Comforter.

ST. JOHN, xiv. 15, 16, 17, 18.

If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever ; Even the Spirit of truth ; whom the world cannot receive ; because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him : but ye know him : for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless : I will come to you.

THE Gospel, a spiritual ministration, is composed of many parts, which form a sublime and harmonious whole : but we may dwell on some parts, to the omission or comparative disregard of others. We may meditate on the doctrines or on the morality of Revelation apart from each other. But is there nothing in Revelation but doctrinal truths and practical injunctions ? However we may furnish our minds with knowledge, or embellish our life with morality, if we forget the vital influence of the Holy Spirit, our reception of the Gospel is partial,—and in fact is not the true reception of it ; and therefore, notwithstanding our Christian profession, we are not its real disciples. It furnishes

us with truths for the illumination of our mind, with laws for the regulation of our conduct, and with a divine power for the renovation of our sinful nature : and he receives it truly who receives it in this its proper universality.

Our blessed Lord gave his disciples, in the verses before us, the promise of another Comforter. *Me-nahem*, or Comforter, was a name given by the Jews to the Messiah ; and they called his days ‘the days of Consolation.’ Our Lord justifies this application of the term to Himself: for He ever was and will be the Consolation of the true Israel. But here He teaches his followers to expect another Comforter. ‘I will pray the Father,’ exercising my office of Intercessor, and ‘He shall give you another Comforter,’ a Substitute for myself, who will complete the work which I have begun.

But, in the first place, He reminds them of his practical requirement, Obedience as the fruit of the love of Him. ‘If ye love me, keep my commandments.’ And what He required of them, He requires of us : we are to love our Redeemer, and to evince that love by holy and righteous conduct.—Having reminded them of this practical demand, He promises them the Spirit of truth,—assuring them that they would not be left comfortless, like desolate orphans, but would virtually have the presence of Christ himself with them, by having his Spirit to dwell in them, and to abide with them for ever.

I. Let us consider Who is here promised. ‘He shall give you another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth.’ The work and offices of the Holy Spirit

in the economy of grace are various : but we may here observe, that with regard to our troubles and sufferings, He is a Comforter ; and with regard to our ignorance, He is the Spirit of truth—the Enlightener of our minds.

1. We view Him as a Comforter. The expression ‘ Another Comforter ’ implies, that He was to be to the disciples what our Lord himself had been to them. They had found in Him a Comforter, and much more : the Holy Spirit therefore would be to them a Comforter, and much more. The word ‘ Paraclete ’ may signify a Monitor, an Advocate, as well as Comforter : and if we reflect on the 18th verse, we may be satisfied that in this passage it is used, chiefly at least, in the last of these meanings. Here, then, is the announcement of a blessed Agent who was to be a Substitute for Christ ; who, as these words teach us, ‘ I will come unto you,’ was to be regarded as Christ himself ; and who was to comfort the disciples in their sorrows and trials. And shall not the promise cheer the hearts of all true believers ? The Lord Jesus Christ is not now seen by us : but the Holy Spirit is revealed to us under the most engaging character. He solicits admission into the heart, and dwells in those who love Christ and keep his laws. ‘ Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you ? ’

Consolation is much needed by man ; for he is subject to various troubles in mind, body, and estate : nor does piety exempt him from suffering. Can the good man see without emotions of grief

the iniquity and misery which abound in the world? Can he see with cold indifference how God is dishonoured, and religion neglected or abused? Is he unaffected by the calamities that befall nations or individuals? Is he insensible when he considers his own sinfulness and unprofitableness? Is no anxious feeling excited in his bosom when he thinks of death, judgment, and eternity? Is he, in a word, with regard to all the ills and woes of a suffering world, the unmoved victim of a frigid obduracy? No: he sees; he feels; he 'sows in tears.' His soul is often 'disquieted within him.' 'We ourselves,' said an Apostle, 'which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves.'—We need Consolation: and to whom shall we look for it but to Him whose office it is to be the Comforter? We leave to the men of the world their philosophy, calculations, schemes, pleasures, and amusements; and we turn to the provision which the Father of mercies has made to meet all our wants. By the agency of the Holy Spirit on our souls we see the love and compassion, the truth and power of God; we acquiesce in his providential dealings, rely on his promises, trust in his goodness, and anticipate in hope the blessed issue of a pious life. He fills the mind with sacred thoughts, and the heart with pure and joyful feelings. He revives and strengthens the drooping soul. Thus are Christ's people comforted in their tribulations. If the Paraclete enable them to look to God as their Father, to Christ as their Redeemer, and to the world of

glory as their inheritance, they have peace, satisfaction, and delight amid the changes and sufferings of the present state.

2. We view the Holy Spirit as a Teacher. He is 'the Spirit of truth.'—The world lay, when our Lord dwelt among us, in falsehood and error; the gentiles under a spirit of delusion, and the Jews under the cheat and imposture of traditions: and thus the reason of the title, 'the Spirit of truth,' will appear; as also what a seasonable and necessary thing it was, that such a Spirit should be sent into the world. The Holy Spirit is 'the Spirit of truth' not only as He was the Spirit of Inspiration by whose influence Truth was communicated to mankind, but also as He is the author of that effectual illumination by which we spiritually understand and receive that Truth. His operations are true,—not filling the mind with vain fancies, or the heart with wild emotions. The word of God is true, and the Holy Spirit is true; and our visible and invisible guides perfectly agree: and those who are taught by their joint agency—for they cannot be separated with impunity—are the real disciples of Christ,—those who are 'taught of God.'

We maintain, that all saving knowledge of divine truth results from the influence of the Spirit of truth: the influence of Him from whom the sacred Volume proceeded is essential for the right understanding and saving reception of that Volume. Without Him it may employ our minds [according to our tastes and abilities; but apart from Him, it will never be to our souls the word of light, life,

and salvation. The natural man may read and study the Scriptures ; but if he refuses to seek the power from above, he will remain, be he learned or unlearned, a natural man, walking forward in darkness and delusion. He may find in them a thousand and a thousand things ; but there are two things which he will not find, and of which, therefore, he has nothing to say with any spiritual feeling—his own lost state, and the way of salvation by a living faith in Christ. But the true Christian knows the darkness and weakness of the human mind. He knows that it is one thing for the light to shine outwardly, and another thing for it to shine inwardly ; one thing for its beams to play about the mind, and another for their efficacy to work upon the heart. His question always is, How shall I obtain a spiritual knowledge and apprehension of divine truth ? And he can answer his own inquiry—‘ The Spirit of truth is the blessed Agent who delivers man from ignorance, prejudice, and unbelief, and enables him to understand the Scriptures, and to think and feel as a child of day.’ He makes a marked distinction between the letter of truth and the Spirit of truth ; and assigns to each its proper office. He therefore dwells upon the written word, and he also prays for the illumination of the Spirit : and his search, meditation, and prayer are not in vain : he is made a spiritual Christian ; and the Bible is to him, not merely a letter or a source of certain ideas, but the word of life—of a renewing and sustaining efficacy.

Such is the goodness of God to man. The pro-

vision which He has made for his instruction is complete. Man, as an intelligent being, has a sacred book to teach him; and, as a disordered being, he has a restoring power offered to him, in order to make that book effectual: and in this we see an adaptation of things to the nature and condition of man, strikingly manifestative of the wisdom and goodness of our heavenly Father.

II. We proceed to consider the Perpetuity of the Holy Spirit's presence. 'That He may abide with you for ever.'—The disciples were troubled because they were about to lose their visible Comforter and Teacher; and here a promise is given them of another, who should remain with them during their sojourn upon earth. But this promise certainly belongs to the universal Church of Christ; and it has been, and is, and shall be fulfilled through all ages. This is the consolation of the Church in all her dangers and sufferings. The existence, indeed, of the Church in the world, as well as the existence of piety in the heart of the individual, depends on the perpetuated agency of the Spirit. What enables any one to repent, believe, perform his duties, endure his trials, conquer the world and himself, and live under the elevating and animating influence of faith, love, and hope? It is not reason, or prudence, or philosophy, but the influence of Him whose energy is granted to the devout. Piety is neither begun nor continued in the soul by human wisdom and power; but its origin, progress, prosperity, and consummation in glory result from the putting forth and the conti-

nuance of a divine agency. If the Spirit were to suspend his influence in any case, the individual, however he might have shone in any of the splendour and beauty of the Christian character, will degenerate into a lukewarm or debating professor, or even rejoin the forsaken world.

The history of the Church and of individuals is exceedingly various. They pass through singular vicissitudes. But whatever be the changes of a restless and fluctuating world, and whatever the feelings and apprehensions of men, the Holy Spirit has been sent forth into the world, and abides in it, and acts, and always will act, upon the changeful and mingled scene—calling in, and building up, and preserving a peculiar people, holy to the Lord. The counsels of redeeming love shall be accomplished, however infidelity may unblushingly promulge its blasphemies, and iniquity pour forth its gloomy tides around us, and folly succeed in alluring her giddy myriads to wander in the mazes of worldly pleasure. The hearts of good men may be at times dismayed: but the Gospel shall prevail, and rule, and triumph. The glory of the Church shall never be extinguished by the fraud and malice of the powers of darkness. Her safety can never be endangered; for the arm of Omnipotence will be her defence, and the inhabiting Spirit of truth and grace will fill her with light and life, with health and beauty.

With regard to the individual believer, he may sometimes walk in darkness, cherish distressful feelings, and dwell in painful rumination on the


trials and changes to which he is subject. But why does he not also dwell on the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, view himself as a partaker of his influence, and hold fast the persuasion that, while he loves Christ and keeps his commandments, the true Comforter and infallible Teacher is and will be always with him? Other gifts vanish away as the cloud, or fade and perish as the flower of the field: but if we receive the gift of the Spirit, and if He be with us, his operations are imperishable; and they invest the soul with a beauty that shall mingle with the glory of heaven, and flourish through the ages of eternity. The soul that has this inestimable treasure may well rejoice amid the evils of a transitory world; for there is sought of heaven lodged in his own material frame. Sinful creatures, indeed, we are; and such, unless we yield to some gay but wild delusion, we must feel ourselves to be; and as such we must lament our corruptions and transgressions with godly sorrow: but yet it becomes us to remember, that our holy faith furnishes us with abundant consolation, and that one pure source of true repose and of happy feelings is found in those gracious words of our Lord—‘that He may abide with you for ever.’

III. We now consider the case of the unbelieving world with regard to this blessed Agent. ‘Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.’—By ‘the world’ may be understood, in general, the thoughtless multitude of mankind, who make temporal things their primary objects, and who are utterly unmind-

ful of their salvation. They live in error and delusion, and are under the prevailing influence of corrupt principles and passions: and the language of self-commendation, in which they frequently abound, affords the fullest proof of their pride and self-sufficiency. They feel no necessity of experiencing the operations of the Holy Spirit. They do not pray for them; and their days are spent without any participation of them. It is true that many of us pray in the language of our Church for 'the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:' yet how many, we would ask, who offer this petition to God do it without any consideration, and are, in the cherished frame of their minds, opposed to the Spirit, and look upon his agency as a fancy, and upon its advocates as mistaken enthusiasts? Many among us undoubtedly reduce religion to a mere professional and formal attachment to the Christian faith, and account it a presumptuous thing to speak of the Spirit of God as dwelling in us. But do such persons consider the language of our Lord? 'He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.' Have they ever rightly meditated on the declaration of St. Paul? 'But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you: now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.'

Our Lord ascribes the rejection of the Spirit by the world to their ignorance of divine things. 'Because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.' The world neither see the real condition of man as a sinful creature, nor the office and work of the Spirit

in the economy of redemption: and they, being in this state of mind and heart, cannot receive Him. They have a lofty conceit of their natural endowments as intelligent creatures, and they magnify their virtue and moral attainments; and being in fact, with all their accomplishments and boast, both blind and dead to their own spiritual circumstances, they do not discover that sanctification, or the renewal of their nature, by the agency of the Spirit is essential to their present happiness and to their final salvation. A redemption, in the riches of divine love and mercy, has been wrought out for us by the Son of God: but this redemption in the application of it to the soul of man, involves a divine operation within us: and as, in order to obtain the eternal bliss, we must be pardoned and justified by faith in Christ, so we must also be sanctified by the Spirit and the word of Christ. But the world are ignorant of this, not necessarily but voluntarily; and therefore although the gospel is professed, its glory is not seen, its power is not felt, and its blessings are not enjoyed. The soul remains in its natural state of spiritual darkness, under condemnation, and in the slavery of sin.—Such is the condition of those who are not partakers of the saving influence of the Spirit. The gospel is to them but little more than a vague idea and an empty sound. They do not, they cannot receive the gospel, because they do not receive the Spirit: and they do not, and cannot receive Him, because they neither see Him nor know Him: and they do not see Him



and know Him, because they wilfully live in pride, ignorance, and unbelief. But, lastly,

IV. We consider the happiness of true believers. ‘But ye know him; for he dwelleth in you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.’—‘Ye know him:’ that is, After a short period He shall descend upon you, and dwell in you; and ye shall know Him spiritually and experimentally.’ The slightest reference to the Acts of the Apostles will show you the fulfilment of these words with regard to the disciples. As to their universal application to the Church, we observe,

1. That true believers know the Spirit. ‘But ye know him.’ They do not see and know Him by their corporeal senses, or by any delusive imaginations, but by the discovery of the written word, and by the spiritual and practical effects of their trust in Him and dependence upon Him. They acknowledge Him to be God the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, the Sanctifier; on whose agency the prosperity of the whole Church, and of each of its members, entirely depends. They behold Him in the Scriptures, in which his person, character, and work are revealed: and their knowledge of Him is not a fruitless notion in the intellect, but a vital and spiritual apprehension of Him as the light, life, and strength of the soul. They have asked, sought, and received: and thus they know Him by what He has wrought in them, and by the work which He is carrying on in them: for,

to use the language of the seventeenth Article of our Church, they 'feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things.'—And we further observe,

2. That true believers have the Spirit dwelling in them. 'For He dwelleth in you, and shall be in you.' He does not merely act upon them transiently, and visit them occasionally, but He resides in them. Not grieving or quenching Him by wilful sin, neglect, and inconsistent conduct, but living in the exercise of faith and prayer, of holiness and circumspection, the promise of Christ is fulfilled on their behalf: and this is their safety, consolation, and joy. Corrupt and weak in themselves, exposed to many evils, and surrounded with enemies, yet they are the temples of the Comforter; in whose strength they are strong, by whose guidance they walk in the right way, under whose protection they are secure, and through whose consoling efficacy they enjoy happiness.—And here we remark again,

3. That true believers are not left in a desolate condition. 'I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you.' Our Lord assured his disciples, that He would not leave them in a destitute state, as bereaved orphans, but would come to them again in his own person after the resurrection, and would more especially come to them after his ascension in the person of the Holy Spirit.—What a kind parent is to his children, and what a


kind teacher is to his scholars, that the Lord Jesus is to his faithful people. He himself is virtually present with them, by reason of that Comforter who is always with his Church. They may be forsaken by relatives and friends; they may be separated from each other by interposing mountains and oceans:—but this is their high and holy consolation—they are never left alone. The faithful and compassionate Saviour is always with them, both in health and sickness, in prosperous and trying hours; whether they mingle with the crowd of the city, or wander over dreary deserts. This delightful persuasion, grounded on the word of truth, and wrought in them by a divine power, fills their breasts with composure, and sometimes with unspeakable joy, amidst the vicissitudes which they may experience in their earthly pilgrimage.

In concluding the discourse,

1. We call upon you to admire the goodness of God to our perishing race. Whom do we see in the Gospel? A reconciled Father, a gracious Redeemer and Intercessor, and an almighty Sanctifier, who is the Teacher and Comforter of all those who truly seek Him. God is revealed to us as the Fountain of living waters—the only satisfying portion of the soul; and we have access to Him through the mediation of Christ and by the operation of the Spirit. Lost in ourselves, and helpless, as we are, yet, in love far exceeding our comprehension, a provision of salvation, of life and health and happiness, has been made for us, and is freely offered to us in all the riches of its mercy and grace. ‘O

that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.' And,

2. We call upon you to seek the possession of the inestimable blessings of redeeming love and mercy. You hear in vain of our Saviour, and of all that He hath done and obtained for us, unless you renounce yourselves, and look to Him and put your whole trust in Him. You hear in vain also of the Holy Spirit, and of all that He is willing and able to effect in you, unless you utterly abandon your proud conceit of self-sufficiency, and earnestly seek his renovating influence, and depend upon Him. The perverseness of Christians in general with regard to salvation, is a painful subject to a feeling and reflecting mind: for by disregarding the love and mercy and wisdom of God, they incur the most awful guilt. 'This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.' You may embrace the opinions, adopt the maxims, and follow the examples of the careless multitude: you may lean on your own understanding, and yield to the passions and inclinations of the corrupt and worldly heart: and thus, notwithstanding the efficacy of atoning blood, and the power of renewing grace, your wilful and ungrateful conduct will issue in eternal ruin. But do not suffer yourselves to be deluded by any sophistry from within or from without. If you would enjoy everlasting life, you must seek and obtain the



blessings which the gospel offers you. The kingdom of God, which is 'peace and righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost,' must be established in your own hearts. Awake ye that sleep: arise, ye that are dead: and earnestly pray for that life which Christ gives to the humble worshipper. 'Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.' And, again,

3. We call upon real Christians to consider their blessedness with all the feelings of unfeigned gratitude, and also to order their conversation, more and more, in agreement with their high and holy calling,—with their glorious prospects and elevated hopes. The Holy Spirit is your Teacher, Sanctifier, and Comforter. He has planted the love of Christ in your souls. He has led you into the narrow way. He has been with you, and is with you. He has supported you in all trials and dangers, and is daily your strength and support. You have experienced the truth of our Lord's promise: and, if you 'love Christ and keep his commandments,' you shall experience it through all your days. Proceed, by divine might, in your righteous course, and your consolation in Christ shall never fail: for the ever-living Head of the Church will be always with you, and his Spirit will always dwell in you. Knowing your blessings and resources, be humble and devout, watchful and cautious, faithful and diligent. Clad in the whole armour of God, and

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strengthened by divine succours, perform your duties, resist temptation, overcome all enemies, endure with patience, and persevere with steadfastness. Thus proving the efficacy of the gospel, you will enjoy its consolations, and look with confiding hope to that happy world where sorrow is unknown, and where you will possess the perfection of blessedness in the perfection of light and holiness.

SERMON XII.

The Blessedness of true Believers.

ST. JOHN, xiv. 19, 20, 21.


*Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more ;
but ye see me : because I live, ye shall live also.
At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father,
and you in me, and I in you. He that hath my
commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that
loveth me : and he that loveth me shall be loved of
my Father ; and I will love him, and will manifest
myself to him.*

OUR blessed Lord, in comforting and instructing his disciples, unfolded the most deep and sublime, the most spiritual and animating truths, with matchless simplicity. Every sentence opened a new scene, and conveyed the most important information : and what He advanced will be studied by the pious of all ages with the greatest advantage and purest delight. Here they will enter into the nature of true piety, see the blessedness and glory of real believers, and discover the means of obtaining the most exalted happiness.

In the verses which we are now to consider, our Lord assures his disciples, that in a little time the world should not see Him, but that they should see Him. If He referred to his personal appear-

ance to them after his resurrection, yet we cannot confine his words to this meaning. He then asserted that, in consequence of his living, they should live also—undoubtedly referring to a divine and spiritual life. He then proceeded to assure them, that at that day, the day of his resurrection and henceforward, their knowledge of Him would be increased, particularly with regard to the union subsisting between the Father and Himself, and to the mutual union between Him and themselves. He further promised to all who love and obey Him, blessings of the highest order—the especial love of the Father and of the Son, and an especial manifestation of the latter to the soul.—Such are the assurances with which He comforted his disciples, and in which He advanced some of those truths, by the right apprehension of which we are led to the possession of an exalted, spiritual, and practical piety.—We propose to examine briefly the several topics which the text contains.

I. True Christians have a knowledge of Christ of which the careless world are destitute. In this proposition we give the spiritual meaning of our Lord's words—‘Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me.’ As to their primary meaning, our Lord was soon to be crucified, to be laid in the grave, and to rise again. These things took place: but He did not show Himself indiscriminately to all after his resurrection: the world saw him no more. ‘Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen



before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead.' The disciples saw Him and associated with Him after the resurrection, in order that they might be witnesses of that stupendous miracle : and thus the words of our Lord had, with respect to them, an exact fulfilment. But they only enjoyed the personal presence of our Lord occasionally, and for a short period, before his entire removal from them into the world of glory. Even then, however, they were to see Him,—not, indeed, in visible presence, but in the light of spiritual knowledge, and by a true faith. Those who are here called the world, thoughtless and unbelieving men, would not have this spiritual vision of Him. Such, we think, is the full meaning of our Lord's declaration : the disciples would have a sight or knowledge of Christ, of which unbelievers would be destitute.

With regard to careless Christians of the present day, what do they see and know of our blessed Saviour ? They may read of Him in the Scriptures, and hear of Him in the public ministry ; for in each the Son of God is set before them as the Saviour of sinners. But is He an object of their spiritual contemplation and apprehension ? No : the Sun of righteousness is hidden from their view by interposing clouds. They do not see Jesus in the dignity of his person, in the riches of his redeeming mercy and love, and in the gracious offices which He sustains. They can speak his name, and relate various particulars of his life ; but they cannot go forth in the movements of elevated thought and of

animated feeling to expatiate on his redeeming work. They are wise, and will not be taught ; secure, and will not be alarmed ; self-sufficient, and will not look out of themselves. The Saviour is to them an unseen and unknown object.

Consider the case of true Christians : ‘ But ye see me.’ They see Him in the light of Scripture, and by the exercise of faith. They behold Him exalted to the dignity of the mediatorial throne, and yet continually present with his Church. They see Him in the Scriptures, in the Sacraments, and in the public ministry. Are the expressions, the Word made flesh, the Lord of glory crucified, the exalted Prince and Saviour, the prevailing Intercessor and Advocate, mere combinations of language in their esteem ? Far otherwise : the Lord Jesus Christ, Godhead dwelling in Manhood, and Manhood taken into intimate union with Godhead, is in their view an object glorious and mysterious, on which they exercise the faculties of their delighted and adoring souls. Their piety is not a mere profession of a creed, to which they adhere because it was the creed of their fathers : but it is a spiritual acquaintance with the gospel,—with its truths, as the wisdom of God, and with its objects, as divine realities. They know themselves and their need of redemption, and Him also who is revealed in the Scriptures as the only Redeemer. The days of darkness and of death have passed away ; and, through the tender mercies of the Most High, they see in the true light, and they feel the living energy. For,

II. True Christians have spiritual life from Christ, the ever-living Head of the Church. 'Because I live, ye shall live also:' that is, Because I live in the kingdom of glory, ye shall live, spiritually, in the kingdom of grace; for in me, as the constituted Mediator, all fulness dwells; and by virtue of my intercession ye shall receive those gifts and influences on which the health and prosperity of the soul depend: and when your earthly sojourn is ended, you shall be advanced to the world in which you shall inherit eternal life.

Those Christians who do not see and know the Redeemer, are spiritually dead. They do not drink of the waters which flow from the Fountain of life. They are prudent in the matters of this world, vigilant to seize opportunities, and eager in prosecuting their schemes and aims. Every faculty of their nature is put forth to its utmost capacity of action. Success fills them with rapture, and disappointment with dismay. But meanwhile they scarcely exhibit the slightest symptom of spiritual feeling and interest; being, in general, entirely unaffected by the most striking exhibition of the bright or dread realities of the invisible state. How surprising and strange! But the solution of the case is easy: they are under the dominion of sin—that deadly evil which pervades their constitution, and which acts with a blinding power on the mind, and with a torpifying power on the heart. It is thus that the man of the world, the vassal of sin, is asleep, insensible, and dead to the momentous concerns of a spiritual existence. He has a thousand

feelings that attach him to his idols, but he has none that fix upon God. He can make unremitted efforts to rise in worldly eminence ; but he refuses to make a feeble effort to climb towards the celestial glory. Put before him the gilded baubles of a perishable materialism, and every atom of his nature is put into action, as by the impulse of resistless principles : but put before him all that is stamped with immutability and eternity—a God, a Saviour, unmingled felicity and unmingled woe—and he is as deaf to them as the rock is to the voice of the thunder, and as insensible to them as the rock is to the glow of the summer's sun, or to the fury of the winter's storm.

But with regard to the true Christian, the Lord Jesus Christ is his life. He is a child of light, because he is enlightened by the word and the Spirit of truth. He is also a partaker of divine life, because he is united to Him in whom is life, and who is the life of all who truly believe in Him. He was once dead, but he is now alive : and this spiritual state implies in it all the feelings and operations which are appropriate to the soul in its present circumstances. It, therefore, implies in it repentance, humiliation, and sorrow ; faith, love, and hope ; all the high and holy aspirings of a soul that looks from a world of sin to a blessed immortality. As this inward life originated from the union of the soul to Christ, so by virtue of the same union it is perpetuated, invigorated, and increased in the soul. And as the state of death in sin, if men remain in it, leads to eternal death, so the state of life by

grace leads to that eternal life which is 'the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.' A few more days or years in this region of shadows and discordant elements, where truth is debased by error, holiness tarnished by corruption, and life mingled with death, and the true believer shall be with his Lord. At the appointed hour also, he shall rise from the dust of the grave, and stand, a transformed and glorified being, in the paradise of perfect and everlasting rest.

You hear of the future life of glory with delight; but what do you think of the present life of grace? Both are indissolubly connected: and he that would live in the presence of Christ hereafter, must have here the divine life in his soul by the efficacy of his Spirit. There must be a fulfilment in him of our Lord's words, 'Because I live, ye shall live also:' there must be a resurrection of the soul from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness; and there must be through all his days on earth a progression in piety,—greater deliverance from sin, and higher attainments in universal holiness.

III. True Christians have a knowledge of the higher order of spiritual things. 'At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.' After our Lord's resurrection, the disciples were instructed in divine things so as to have proper apprehensions of the union between the Father and the Son, and of the union between Him and themselves: but this knowledge is attainable by us, and if we do not seek it, we do not properly consult our spiritual growth and happiness.


1. Real Believers see the dignity of Christ as one with the Father. 'Ye shall know that I am in my Father.' The true knowledge of Christ, essential to piety, comprehends in it many things, and among these the fact which He has here advanced—his being in the Father. How dim, defective, and partial are the views which are entertained of our Lord by even many true Christians! They are apt to confine their thoughts to a few important truths and facts, and seem to have no notion of those more elevated views which the gospel undoubtedly unfolds to us. As the union of Christ with the Father is one of the highest articles of our holy faith, so it is one that is most powerfully influential on the soul when it is rightly apprehended and improved. It raises the mind, kindles the affections, and animates and regulates conduct. Speculation may make us philosophers and theologians, but it is faith that makes us Christians. We have, however, a wrong notion of faith, if we suppose that it confines the mind to those truths which are familiar and of a comparatively low order; for its legitimate province is confessedly the whole field of revelation. There are certain plain and obvious truths which, apprehended by faith, are the basis of piety, and are, to change the figure, the aliment of piety, and which are never to be disregarded: but the higher truths of the gospel, believingly received, are those which produce that strong and exalted piety which ought to prevail among the followers of Christ. The scriptural truth, that Christ is in the Father, if it be spiritually apprehended, gives us a peculiar

conviction of our Lord's personal dignity, so that we confide in Him, glory in Him, and always look to Him with adoration, gratitude, and joy. In other words, it is thus that we cherish the truly Christian frame of spirit. There is a grandeur in our thoughts, a life and elevation in our feelings, a joy and satisfaction in our souls, a resignation, serenity, and peace in our bosoms, which nothing but this truth could produce and sustain.

2. Real believers have a spiritual knowledge of that union which subsists between Christ and his Church. 'And ye in me, and I in you.'—'Ye in me;'—true believers are in Christ, united to Him; He being the Vine, they the branches; He being the Head, they the mystical body; He being the foundation, they the lively stones that compose the spiritual building. They are in Him by the operation of the Holy Spirit; by faith and love; the objects of his favour and partakers of his blessings.—'And I in you;'—Christ is in his people;—in his Church, and in every member of it, by virtue of his presence, of his Spirit, and of his truth. Thus He speaks, 'He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.'

Some may ask, What does this mean? Others may scoff, and treat the subject as a mere flight of the imagination. But the true believer has not so learned Christ. He reflects on the language of our Lord, 'Ye in me, and I in you;' and he sees in those sublime expressions a spiritual reality which inspires his soul with the noblest sentiments and the happiest feelings. The Gospel of Christ does

not appear to him merely as a revelation of certain truths which are to be the basis of all his views, and of certain laws which are to regulate his conduct ; but he regards it also as a revelation of spiritual beings, facts, and circumstances which are of the most astonishing and delightful character : for what can be more so than to see heaven and earth united ; than to see that God is in Christ, and Christ in God—that believers are in Christ, and Christ in believers—that, although we are feeble and sinful mortals, we are raised to a union with the Father of our spirits through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus ? We walk by faith, as to this matter, and not by sight : but the objects of faith are as real as the objects of sense ; and the apprehensions of faith, when grounded on the word of God, are as trustworthy as the apprehensions of our senses are, when the objects of the natural world are presented to them. Christ dwells in his people, and they dwell in Him :—the believer acknowledges the grandeur and rejoices in the consolation. Is this unintelligible to you ? All that we can say to you is, It is scriptural truth : It is a spiritual fact : and it behoves every one of you to read carefully the word of God, and to pray for the promised influences of the Holy Spirit, in order that you may know it in the experience of your own souls. If you suppose, that the subject of which we are speaking is an exalted sort of piety, which belongs only to a few favoured and peculiar individuals, your idea is wrong, and you are guilty of a great injustice to yourselves. But,



IV. True Christians prove their love of Christ by obedience to his laws. 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.' To 'have the commandments' is, to have a spiritual knowledge of them in the intellect, to have a full assent of the judgment in favour of them as an inestimable treasure, and to have them in our memory as the matter of meditation. To 'keep the commandments' is, to observe and do them, to live and act according to them. There is an indissoluble connection between true knowledge and right action : and where these are found together in any person, by him the love of Christ may be spoken of with confidence. When Jesus says, 'He it is that loveth me,' it is evident from his words, that those do not love Him whose knowledge is not practical.

But how, we may ask, can any persons form low views of obedience, when they consider the declaration of our Lord ? He is here unfolding some of the loftiest truths of religion, and He brings in obedience as the test of principle, and as a pre-requisite for the complacential love of God and for the further manifestation of Christ to the soul. When we consider who Christ is in Himself, and what He is to his people ; when we see the gospel stamped with every noble and attractive feature ; and when our imagination is active and our affections alive ; we may make very specious professions of loving Him. But let us remember his own words, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.' Whatever our views, feel-

ings, and professions may be, action is the test of principle.

The love of Christ is one great principle of Christian piety: and our love of Him is to be proved by our submission to his authority and our observance of his laws. It is possible for us to extol them in words as holy, just, and good, and at the same time to disregard them in practice. But if we have the love of Christ in our souls, not as a sentiment or feeling, but as a real principle, we shall strive to regulate our thoughts, affections, words, and actions by them. We may be admirers of religion, and yet not be doers of religion. We may admire doctrines, and [not receive them; admire the Christian temper, and not cultivate it; and admire Christian morality, and yet not be Christian moralists. But no truth shines more clearly upon the sacred page than this, that without a holy and obedient life, not as a substitute for, but as the fruit of, Christian principles, we are not among the true followers of Jesus. No luminous view of doctrine, no lofty flight of imagination, no vehement ebullition of feeling, no animated profession of attachment to the Christian faith, is any substitute for the plain, humble, exact, and habitual work of practical piety. Let some decry doctrine, as unfavourable to morality; let others decry morality as infecting the gospel with legalism: but both are very mistaken; for Christian doctrine and Christian morality, however mis-stated, perverted, or abused, are in reality Cause and Effect. While the mercy and grace of the gospel are our only

hope, the path of obedience is the only path that leads to heaven. Submission of mind and heart to the doctrine of Christ, is faith; and submission to his laws, is obedience: and such faith and obedience constitute a man a true Christian.

It is thus that the humble believer thinks and feels. He is truly desirous that the love of Christ should prevail in his heart: but he would not be as a tree covered with beautiful foliage, yet destitute of fruit. He trembles at the thought of being found in the last day to have been an unprofitable servant. While he professes to love Christ, his study and aim are, to become more fruitful in every good word and work.—We further observe, that,

V. True Christians are loved by the Father and the Son, and have a peculiar manifestation of the Son made to them. ‘And he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.’ A distinction is here to be made between the antecedent and the consequent love of God. The former is that of Benevolence; the latter, that of Complacency. By the former, the grace of calling, regeneration, illumination, and justification is conferred upon us; by the latter, the grace of more abundant illumination, sanctification, preservation, and assurance: and of this latter our Lord here speaks.

The careless presume that they are the objects of God’s love and favour: but they can assign no solid reason of their confidence. We would remind them, that those, and those only, who love Christ, are the persons in whom God delights. ‘He that

loveth me shall be loved of my Father.' Unless, then, the love of Christ prevails in our souls, we have no just ground for concluding that the love of God rests upon us. But the love of Christ implies in it both a complete surrender of ourselves to Him, to be saved and ruled by Him, and the highest delight and complacency in Him. Without this love, springing from faith, we are yet alienated from God, and under his displeasure. Do you love Christ, obey his laws, and follow his example? The careless must feel that they do not : the Saviour is to them in fact an unknown object : and in this state their brightest thoughts about the love of God and the bliss of heaven are nothing but a gay delusion.

But real Christians know Christ, love Him, and prove their love by obedience to his laws. They understand the commandments in their spirituality, and their delight is in them. The result is, that the love of God and of Christ rests upon them, and that further manifestations, or spiritual discoveries, of the glory and goodness of Christ are granted to them. As they advance prosperously in their course, they increase in the knowledge of Christ. Such is the promise before us. If the love of Him be planted in our souls, if we cherish this principle, if it be in us the spring, life, and soul of obedience, we are entitled to the consolation which our Lord's promise was intended to impart to his faithful followers. Not only were the disciples the partakers of the divine love, and not only were they to be


favoured with more full discoveries of Christ; but true believers of every age were to enjoy the same blessedness. 'He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.' True believers love and obey; and they are loved and enlightened. Their love is fixed upon God and Christ; and the love of God and Christ is fixed upon them. In order that their principle and its fruits may abound, and that they may glorify God more, and prepare for the magnificence and felicity of heaven, they are led onward, in the use of their means of grace and by the influence of the Holy Spirit, to higher attainments; to those views of divine things, and especially of the Redeemer, which are more clear, extensive, spiritual, and efficient. Experience is the best proof—but we cannot enlarge on the subject.

We have now, then, put briefly before you some of the delightful mysteries of our holy faith; some of the august and blessed peculiarities of the true Christian. Every thing here is equally great and pleasing; elevating the soul to the noblest contemplation, and filling it with the purest joy. But it is not enough to hear, approve, and admire these things; to feast the imagination with the grandeur and beauty which they unfold; or to take an occasional excursion into the sacred field of holy meditation. If we would possess that happiness which will abide with us through the changing scenes of life, which will not fail us in the hour of death, and which will be perfected and perpetuated through

eternity, the promise of our Lord, which was fulfilled in the case of the disciples, must be fulfilled also in ours.

It is painful to think how Christians in general disregard all that relates to their spiritual welfare, and, in the enjoyment of the highest privileges, remain in ignorance, sin, and death. And further, how few, comparatively speaking, of those who know something about Christ, and derive spiritual life from Him, regard as they ought the spiritual union that subsists between Him and his Church, and advance in knowledge and religious attainments! Do such characters as those which our Lord describes abound among us? Christians we are, as having been baptized into Christ: but true Christians we are not, unless we spiritually know Him, and are faithfully striving to become possessors of a deep, pure, inward, and practical piety. We are to be charitable; but we are also to be faithful: and therefore we remind you with great plainness of speech, that the final condition of those Christians will be unspeakably awful, who, professing the gospel, never earnestly sought, and therefore never received, its light, life, power, and inestimable blessings. We exhort and beseech you to consider the subject with becoming seriousness, and not to presume, trifle, or procrastinate in a matter of infinite importance to you.

The true and prosperous believer will dwell in pious meditation on the things which he has heard, and will rejoice in the happiness of which he feels himself to be a partaker. Often contemplate your



blessed and exalted portion. How, indeed, can it ever be long absent from your thoughts! And let your apprehension of it stimulate you to greater diligence in practical piety, and encourage you in your trials, difficulties, and sorrows. Proceed with meekness and humility in the path of holiness and obedience : and in that path, while you adorn your Christian profession with all that is useful, lovely, and of good report, you will receive larger measures of illumination, satisfaction, and happiness. Neither loiter in that path, nor wander from it. Never rest contented with present attainments and performances, but ‘grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.’ Thus your light will shine before men ; your souls will prosper ; you will finish your course with joy ; and, this life ended, you will enter into that world in which you will enjoy for ever the manifestation of the Father and of the Son ;—in which you will have the beatific vision of the sublime and glorious mysteries of the spiritual world, without interruption, and without an interposing cloud.

SERMON XIII.

Divine Manifestation explained.

ST. JOHN, xiv. 22, 23, 24.

Judas saith unto him (not Iscariot,) Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear, is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

THE gospel, a gracious revelation of the counsels of God respecting mankind, is given to us in a manner adapted to our nature and circumstances, and fitted to accomplish its great design. The glory of spiritual things cannot be apprehended by our corporeal organs: it is therefore unfolded to us in the sacred volume in the way which is best calculated to give us an influential conception of it. We are surrounded with a dense and gross materialism; but we have the written word for our instruction in spiritual things; and it is our duty to put forth our mental faculties in the closest meditation upon it, always seeking illumination from the Father of lights. We are not, indeed, to make

religion either a mechanical form or an intellectual speculation: neither are we to plunge into mystical reveries, through the ardour of our feelings, or the activity of our fancy. There is a sublime and intimate intercourse between the Father of spirits and our spirits, which is equally remote from the inertness of the formalist, the reasoning of the intellectualist, and the imaginations of the mystical and visionary. Sound Christians duly regard that law of our present condition,—we walk *by* faith, and not by sight. They are fully aware that, although they move in the light of divine truth, an obscurity, which they cannot penetrate, rests on divine things. There is a barrier beyond which they cannot pass; a mode of conception which they cannot exceed. Religion is in their view spirit and life: it is connected with real objects and operations: but every discovery of these matters which pretends to any thing more than faith, is in their apprehension extremely questionable.—With such sentiments in our minds, we proceed to examine our text. And here we consider,

I. The Inquiry of the disciple. ‘Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how wilt thou manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?’—The disciples expected that Messiah’s kingdom would be in some respect temporary; and they were perplexed to discover how Jesus would manifest himself to them, and yet not be seen by others. Such a manifestation did not comport with their secular views and hopes: but they were anxious to know what our Lord’s declaration meant: they felt

deeply 'interested in it, and immediately solicited an explanation of it. We admire their conduct, and we put it before you for your imitation.

1. We see their Ignorance: and we may be here reminded of our own. 'And will manifest myself to him,' was the expression of our Lord; and it was not understood by the disciples. It is far more intelligible to us now, than it was to them at that time; for they, being yet unacquainted with the pure spirituality of the gospel, would look to a variety of Patriarchal and Jewish images. But have we examined, and can we explain, these words? In what does the manifestation of Christ to the believing soul consist? Is it in the sight of some effulgent glory, or in something else? Let it not be said, that it related only to the disciples; for it relates to every one who loves Christ and keeps his commandments. True Christian piety is universally and perpetually the same thing—a divine and spiritual discovery of Christ. You may be perplexed at this, or treat it as a fancy, or as something very mysterious and inexplicable. But why is this the case? It is not because the subject is one that is remote and abstract, and one that cannot be apprehended. If you deem it a peculiarity, yet it is one that belongs to all true believers. You profess the gospel, but do not study what you profess: you do not examine these sacred matters, and pray for a spiritual understanding of them. You are satisfied with vague and dim notions; and as to the glorious things of the spiritual world which the Scriptures reveal, a dark cloud rests upon your

minds. Let the ignorance of the disciples lead us to reflect upon our own. But,

2. We see the Teachableness of the disciples: and let it show us what frame of mind all Christians should maintain. They did not suffer the declaration of our Lord to pass unnoticed. They did not pretend to understand it: but they did not doubt of its conveying some important truth, and they were desirous of knowing what it was: rather, therefore, than remain without an explanation, they readily acknowledge their ignorance. They were teachable.—To be without the knowledge of divine things may be viewed as a great misfortune: to remain in that state is a great crime. A sense of ignorance, a desire of knowledge, an inquiring and teachable spirit, are among the elements that lie at the threshold of instruction. We ought to consider the unspeakable importance of religious knowledge, and to seek it with the humility and simplicity of children. Never be ashamed to avow your ignorance: but be deeply ashamed to remain contented in it. The wisest men are only scholars: if they know much, yet there is far more which they do not know: and they are learning something daily. It is a point of great moment to every one, that, with regard to religious truth, he should be willing and anxious to be taught.

3. We see the Wisdom of the disciples, and what is one point of true wisdom in every man. They did not dispute about the declaration of our Lord, but desired to have it explained. Their right frame of mind led to a right mode of con-

duct. Let every Christian imitate them. If the mind be teachable, the ground is prepared to receive the good seed of divine truth: but the best dispositions without proper exertion will be of no avail. Indolence is as fatal to our best interests as pride: and we could look on the ignorance of our fellow men with comparatively little pain, if we found among them a spirit of serious inquiry,—a readiness and eagerness to become acquainted with the gospel. This spirit, however, is by no means prevalent. A death-like slumber, a deep moral lethargy, a cold and inert apathy rest upon the souls of men, and they are strangers to spiritual feeling and activity. Instructions may be read or heard by them: but no deep reflection is used, no close inquiry is made, and therefore no sound knowledge of sacred subjects is acquired. We cannot tell you too plainly, that no quantity of mere reading and hearing will make any one wise unto salvation: thought, examination of subjects, and prayer are essential; and from the letter of the Bible, we must press into its spirit and rise into its light. Without this exertion of our whole intelligent nature; without duly improving that important question, ‘Understandest thou what thou readest?’ without proposing our difficulties to those who are able to solve them; and, especially without seeking the Spirit of truth to bless us in our labours, and to enlighten our minds; we do not act as reasonable creatures. Imitate the disciples; for this is to act wisely, and in a manner equally beneficial and laudable.


We exhort you to cherish and imbibe an inquiring spirit in sacred matters. If you would be sound and prosperous Christians, you must be persons of thought and inquiry through the whole of life. It is easy to learn a few sentiments and phrases, and to dogmatise with zeal within a narrow compass of thought: but a man of real understanding cannot be deceived by such a paltry exhibition of knowledge. The Christian who will not think and inquire, proceeds year after year in a tame monotonousness of thought, feeling, and expression. He is like the sailor who never loses the sight of the shore; who never ventures to go far away upon the bosom of the fathomless and boundless ocean. In order to avoid this evil, so fatal to the growth of the soul in a strong, pure, sublime, and animated piety, the faithful Christian will ponder, examine, and question, as well as read, hear, and pray.

II. We consider the Reply of our Lord. 'Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.' This, we should remember, is the reply of our Lord to the question, 'Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?' The manifestation here spoken of, is not that which is made to the soul in the commencement of piety, but that further manifestation on which the prosperity of the soul depends; the enjoyment of which, with all the blessedness which it involves, is most intimately connected with our

fidelity and diligence in improving the grace already received.—In our Lord's reply,

1. We see the prerequisites to this further manifestation. These are love and obedience. Faith in Christ and the love of Him are the great principles of the gospel. Glorious in Himself, the Redeemer of our sinful world, the Author of our blessings, and the only foundation of our hopes, He is entitled to our supreme regard; and we ought to be able to say as Peter did, 'Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.' The true Christian knows Christ, and loves Him in sincerity. He deplores the remaining dulness of his heart; but his first desire and his fervent prayer are, that he may love Him more and more. And he evinces this love by obedience; by cheerfully submitting to Christ's authority, as the King and Lawgiver of his Church; by bearing his yoke and following his Example. They who have not the love of Christ in the heart, walk with the careless multitude, and their life is a course of disobedience. They are full of self-confidence; yield to their passions, inclinations, and prejudices; and imitate those around them. But true believers follow a heavenly guide, and are upheld in the way of righteousness by a heavenly power.

'The words and sayings' of Christ, it may be observed, comprehend his doctrines, as well as his commands: and the expression 'keep my words,' may be viewed as comprehending all the doctrines and precepts of the gospel. We may be partial in religion; holding some doctrines, and neglecting others; or observing some injunctions, and disre-



garding others : but he only is the true Christian who entirely submits to the whole gospel ; receiving every doctrine, and obeying every command. On no consideration will he mutilate or distort the truth from a regard to views which are pleasing to his own mind ; and on no account will he regard any obedience that he may render to some precepts, to be a compensation for his neglecting others.

Thus we see what our Lord requires of us, and what characters we must be, in order to be partakers of that divine manifestation of which He speaks. We are to love Him ; and we are to prove that love by a faithful adherence to his doctrines, and by a diligent observance of his laws. We must maintain a careful perseverance in this excellence : for efficient as our love may be, decided as our attachment to the truth may be, and prompt as our obedience to the scriptural commands may be, at any one time, we cannot conclude from this that our love will never abate, that our decision in the truth will never relax, and that our promptitude in obedience will never be affected by tardiness or reluctance. Hence we have the greatest reason to be always on our guard against every thing that may lead to declension in piety. We may be assailed by seducing errors ; but let us hold fast the truth as it is in Jesus : we may be tempted to wander from the path of obedience ; but let us not yield to temptation, and let us never grow weary in well doing. Our recompense will then be great : for,

2. Let us consider that further Manifestation of

Christ which is promised to the believer. 'And my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.' Our Lord had said, 'He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.' If we compare the two passages, we immediately see, that the divine manifestation is purely spiritual, consisting in the indwelling of God in the soul, and granted only to those who are in all respects living as the real followers of Christ. No occasion is here given for vain fancies and idle pretensions. The imagery which our Lord uses is probably derived from the Jewish Tabernacle: Exodus, xlix. 43, 45. 'And there will I meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God.'—But we observe,

i. That the true Christian is the object of the love of God: 'And my Father will love him.' The tender mercies of God are over all his works. He showers the bounties of providence on the unthankful and the evil, as well as on those who fear him. He offers the blessings of redemption to all, wherever the gospel is preached. But can any Christians who are devoted to the world, doing their own will, seeking their own pleasure, and putting off all serious thought of spiritual things, suppose that God loves them as He loves his faithful servants? They may, indeed, indulge the hope that He loves them, and will be merciful to them: but the indulgence of such hope is a melancholy proof of the blinding, perverting, and deceiving power of sin.

There are persons whom God loves ; and our Lord has told us who they are,—those, and those only, who know Christ, believe in Him, love Him, and obey Him. They are the children of God by adoption and grace. An earthly parent loves his children ; he looks upon them with an eye of tenderness, and they are peculiarly dear to him : and shall not our heavenly Father love those of the human family whom He denominates his sons and daughters? Let the humble and holy believer meditate on this with joy. Let him cherish the delightful assurance, that the love of God rests upon him. For such a persuasion he has the strongest ground : and it ought to prove to him an unfailing source of comfort, among the sorrows and vicissitudes of the present state ; and it should also be an incentive to him to love Christ with greater sincerity, to believe in Him with greater steadfastness, and to obey Him with greater care and diligence. What stronger inducement can he have to abound in these things than the conviction, grounded on the clearest assertions of Scripture, that the love of God—his complacential love—rests upon him in proportion as he abounds in them? But,

ii. The true Christian enjoys the friendly presence of God and of Christ : ‘ And we will come unto him.’ We know what nearness and distance, friendship and enmity, intercourse and estrangement signify with regard to the society of human beings ; and thus we can easily illustrate our spiritual condition. Man is naturally far from God,

at enmity with Him, and alienated from Him, but when through divine grace he spiritually receives Christ according to the gospel, renouncing himself, and looking unto Jesus, the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world, his state is entirely changed; for he is brought into a state of reconciliation and friendship with God, and of nearness to Him. There was a disunion and contrariety; but now there is union and concord. They stood, if we may speak so, aloof from each other; but now there exists between them the most intimate fellowship. While man retains his pride and his self-sufficiency, he refuses the mercy and grace of the gospel, and he is in the frame of his soul at a distance from God. Are pride and self-sufficiency renounced? Does man with humility, contrition, faith, and gratitude embrace the offered salvation? Then is there a mutual approach, and a mutual intercourse; and then is that Scripture verified, 'Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.'


Our Lord uses in the text that language with which we are familiar, and images borrowed from our conduct towards each other. When persons between whom there has been estrangement, are reconciled to each other, they look upon each other with kind regard, and amity and intercourse are restored: and, in like manner, when friendship is established between God and the believing soul, the Father and the Son are represented as coming to it, and holding intercourse with it. In the ordinances of religion, in reading the Scriptures, in

private prayer, and in seasons of holy meditation it has visitations from above. Our apprehensions of the merciful dealings, of the love and condescension of Jehovah towards his faithful people; of the exalted and intimate union that subsists between Him and them; are feeble and imperfect at the best: but the words of our Lord lead us of necessity to form the most elevated conceptions of the honour and happiness of the pious. Here also we see the glory of the gospel—the sublimity and grandeur which belong to it and to its real disciples. But, further,

iii. The true Christian enjoys the abiding presence of God and of Christ: ‘And make our abode with him.’ You may be here reminded of that gracious declaration which we have in the prophet Isaiah: ‘Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.’ True believers are the temples of God by the indwelling of the Spirit. Their blessedness does not consist in the mere enjoyment of transient visits, or in mere occasional acts, on the part of God, but in his permanent residence with them—in his abiding or dwelling in them. When our Lord assured his disciples, that He would manifest Himself to those who loved Him and kept his word, He assured them, in other terms, that both the Father and Himself would come to them and abide with them: that is, this spiritual union, fellowship,

and indwelling, are to be accounted a manifestation: and such they are in their effects; for in whatever instance they take place, the soul acquires the true and saving knowledge of God and divine things. This manifestation, we grant, is unintelligible to the natural man,—to him who is not divinely taught, and who enters into sacred subjects no further than his natural powers of intellect and imagination are competent to conduct him. But let it not be supposed, on this account, that it implies any thing that is mystical, fanciful, or absurd. It is not connected with dreams, voices, or visions; with any gaudy chimeras of the fancy, or with any turbulent movement of the faculties. It is not man's own attainment, any further than as it is attained in the use of our means of grace: it is the gift and operation of God himself by his Spirit. The truths of the Scriptures are rendered effectual by a divine agency: the believing and devout soul is enlightened, increases in knowledge, and has its affections made more pure, vital, and exalted: it has a spiritual understanding, a spiritual apprehension, of divine things: and between Jehovah and that soul there is a blessed affinity,—there is an abiding of the one in the other. So near is God to believing souls, and so near are believing souls to Him.

But when can any one say, that he has the strongest sense of the divine presence, and the clearest view of the divine perfections? Not, we reply, when his imagination is most glowing, his emotions most ardent and turbulent, or his intellect



most acute ; but when the soul is calm and serene, humble and believing, and dwells closely and deeply on spiritual things with devout meditation. In this deep exercise and highest enjoyment of the soul, there is no violation of the law, that the Christian life is a life of faith and not of sight. The written word is our guide and warrant : and according to that word, God and Christ are with the believing soul : and where they are, darkness and death cannot be. Where they are, there will be light and spiritual sensibility. This light and life, however, leave us in the full and proper exercise of our faculties, and are, in fact, only the restoration and health of them. At the same time, this light and life, by their healing influence and perfecting tendency, lead us to the real possession of those views, principles, and affections in which exalted piety consists. We do a gross injustice to the gospel, if we do not assert and maintain the high and magnificent privilege of the true Christian, and if we do not propose it to you as an object that demands your serious attention at all times ; in order to inspire your hearts with comfort, and to encourage and animate you to fidelity and diligence in seeking to be men and fathers in Christ ;—such as know and enjoy something at least of the maturity of the Christian character.

In concluding the discourse, we admonish you,

1. To remember the conduct of the disciple, and to follow his example. Why are Christians in general so unacquainted with the gospel as they are ? They do not make it a subject of thought and in-

quiry. They presume that they know all which is needful to be known. Abandon, we beseech you, such a ruinous method of proceeding, and imitate the disciple in the text. You have the strongest encouragement to do this; for the inquiry of the disciple met with an immediate reply; and He who answered him will answer you, and pour upon you the blessed light of spiritual knowledge. 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not: and it shall be given him.' Again,


2. We admonish you to form the most elevated views of Christian godliness. How, with the words of Christ before you, can you reduce it to a few vague notions, lifeless forms, and transient feelings? It is the love of Christ in the heart; subjection to his words and laws; nearness to God, union with Him, and his love resting upon the soul: it is God and Christ in the redeemed and sanctified. This is no speculation, dream, or fancy, but the plain doctrine of Scripture: and here we see the real description of the true believer in Christ. Nothing more delighted or exalted can be conceived. Consider the subject, and earnestly pray that you may be partakers, through the Holy Spirit, of such piety. Be not supine and indifferent, or cavilling and contentious: but be thankful that the day of grace is continued, and be diligent and strenuous to make yourselves effectually acquainted with these things. Christian godliness is far from being the cold, tame, and lifeless thing which it is too commonly thought to be. Meditate on our text;

correct your errors, and improve and enlarge your views. And further,

3. We admonish you to form a just estimate of the true Christian character. Disliked, or derided, or calumniated, real Christians may be by many: but yet they are the great and the excellent of the earth. In judging of character, can you hesitate for a moment whether you are to listen to the word of God or to men? He is great whose mind is enriched with learning; he who abounds with the riches of the world; he who, as the defender of his country, vanquishes her enemies; and he who associates with the mighty and exalted of the earth. Let these be great: but we put before them a man whose mind is enlightened with the wisdom from above, who is rich in the principles and fruits of righteousness, who is conqueror over all the powers of evil, who enjoys amity, union, and fellowship with God; and we claim for him the title of preeminently great: for the true and substantial greatness belongs to him. Although he be surrounded with no pomp, and be greeted with no shouts when he appears; and though his name be scarcely known more than 'half a mile from home,' and shall adorn no record but the register—no tablet but the tombstone; yet he is known in the regions of light; he has the gratulations of angels; he is approved by the Father of spirits; and he shall be commended in the last day by the Judge of all: and his greatness will appear, and shine forth, when the boasted greatness of worldly men shall have sunk into everlasting oblivion. Form

what estimates you please, and extol whomsoever you will: but think of immortality and eternity, and you are compelled to admit, that the true Christian,—he in whom God dwells here, and who shall dwell with God for ever,—ought to have the first place in your estimation. And once more,

4. We would admonish the pious among you to contemplate your own blessedness, to rejoice in the divine goodness, and to abound in faith, love, and obedience: for thus your knowledge and your happiness will be increased. You may be ready, perhaps, to make your penitential acknowledgments that you have not duly improved your blessings and privileges. Let a conviction of past indolence and unfaithfulness urge you to greater fidelity and to more strenuous exertions for the future. Let a view of your relation to God and Christ, and of their gracious condescension towards you, inspire you with composure, comfort, and courage amid the various trials and troubles of life. Beware of every enemy; of every thing that would injure or corrupt your inward piety; of every thing that would mar your conduct as the servants of Christ. A spiritual sense of God's presence; a consciousness of fellowship with Him; that wisdom of habitual thought, and that purity of habitual feeling, which allow us to say without presumption, that God is near to us and we near to Him;—these things are easily spoken of, as matters of speculation, fancy, and debate: but no comfortable measure of them can be realised without unceasing watchfulness and prayer. If we would live in the



Spirit, we must walk in the Spirit. Proceed, then, in your glorious course, increasing in faith, love, and obedience. You will be thus continually maturing for that blessed and perfect state of being, where the darkness and impediments of the present world will have no existence;—where the manifestations of faith which you now enjoy will be succeeded by that manifestation of immediate vision which will be the inheritance of glorified spirits through eternal ages.

SERMON XIV.

The Holy Spirit the Effectual Teacher.

ST. JOHN, xiv. 25, 26.

These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

THE Gospel discovers to us a complete provision for the removal of all the evils consequent upon the fall of man, and to supply the wants of our impoverished nature. The Father is revealed in it in his adorable perfections; 'the Word made flesh' is revealed in it as the only Mediator; and the Holy Spirit as the almighty Sanctifier; and we are godly or ungodly, happy or miserable, as we are, or are not, partakers of the saving operations of the promised Comforter.—The general development of the divine purposes, is a subject that can scarcely fail to gain the attention of the careful reader of Scripture. Slowness and order are manifest in the divine proceedings. The instructions of our blessed Lord were in some respects partial: thus He observed, 'I have many things

to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.' In the verses which we are to consider at present, He led his disciples to anticipate a further discovery of divine things by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, whom the Father would send in his name—as merited by Him, and as occupying his place. The Holy Spirit, the Substitute of Christ himself, was to be their effectual Teacher. In order to see the fulfilment of our Lord's promise, and to make the subject one of practical interest, we shall consider the promise in reference to the disciples and also in reference to ourselves.

I. Let us, then, consider the disciples in different circumstances; or in other words, let us view them while they were the intimate associates of our Lord; what they were after his crucifixion; and what they were after the descent of the Holy Spirit upon them.

1. We view them while they were the intimate associates of our Lord. During this time their privileges were great. They heard his instructions; they saw his astonishing and gracious miracles; they beheld Him in public and in private, among friends and enemies; they were witnesses of his amiable spirit and unspotted life. They heard his matchless wisdom when He unfolded the Scriptures, answered inquiries, instructed the ignorant, put gainsayers to silence, and conversed familiarly with themselves. They had thus possessed means of obtaining some right views of his person and kingdom. How could they hear and see such things as they heard and saw, and yet

remain in ignorance, and continue to cherish the secular prejudices of their countrymen? They did indeed form, as we see from the confession of Peter, some very correct notions of the person of Christ; but they certainly did not enter into the real nature and spirit of the evangelical dispensation. They were ambitious, worldly in their views and expectations, and far from having right conceptions of the spiritual nature and universal design of the Gospel. Their minds, in short, were very partially enlightened, and their hearts very partially influenced, by what they had heard and witnessed.

2. But we may view them when they were left to themselves after the crucifixion of our Lord. They were so far left to themselves as to enable us to form, in a general manner, an idea of their spiritual state, or frame of mind. So far as time was given them for developing their character, we see that they were void of artifice,—men of unquestionable honesty and simplicity: but we also see that they were thrown into the greatest perplexity, and were yielding to despondency with melancholy feelings of disappointment. They did not yet understand the Scriptures; they retained their former prejudices; and the removal of their Head was the extinction of their fondest hopes. They were, indeed, in a direct way to abandon their holy cause, and to return to their former occupation, as a dispirited and forlorn body of men. In this, however, we see consistency. The disciples were honest and sincere; men of uprightness and

integrity : but they were without clear views, and without those feelings which clear and efficient views produce in the soul. If they had been utterly forsaken, it is evident that during their future life they would have remembered many of the words and actions of Jesus, and they would have regarded the time during which they had associated with Him as a remarkable period. His image would have been often in their minds ; but they could have only remembered Him, and their intercourse with Him, as a pleasing, perplexing, and inexplicable dream ; which would be viewed through the widening interval of years, with greater dimness and indistinctness, and which would make a feeble impression upon them whenever it might be recollected. Many of his words and actions would have been forgotten : few only, at the most, of his instructions would have been rightly understood : and his spirit would never have been imbibed and cherished. Human opinions and worldly objects would have acted upon their minds with an obliterating and assimilating influence : and while in some of their thoughts and feelings they might have been different from their countrymen, they would upon the whole, have been reduced to a level with them. Others might have taken up the history of Jesus of Nazareth, and made it subservient to their purposes, according to their interest or caprice ; but the disciples would have spent their days in silence and obscurity.

3. We now view them as partakers of the Holy Spirit after the ascension of our Lord. His promise

was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, as we read in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. And what was the effect of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples? He not only enabled them to speak in various languages, but He also acted with a mighty agency on their souls, as the Spirit of truth and grace. The invisible operations of his power, in rectifying their views and feelings, were not less wonderful than the visible and audible miracles of that eventful day. We see them assuming at once a new character. They had right apprehensions of the person of Christ, of his redeeming work, and of the nature of his kingdom. They were able to prove from the Old Testament, that He was the promised Messiah; and they preached salvation through faith in Him, with unhesitating confidence and undaunted boldness. They rose at once from the imbecility of spiritual youth to the vigour and maturity of spiritual manhood. Our Lord, indeed, had opened their understandings: and when, in addition to this preparatory-work, the effectual influence of the Spirit was given them, they appear before us as men competent to maintain the dignity and to perform the labours of the Apostolical office,—promulging the new Dispensation with resistless argument. No sacrifice was too great for them to make; and no difficulty or danger prevented their acting as the faithful heralds of the divine truth. They did not account even their lives dear unto them. They now knew our Saviour in the brightness of his glory, and in the unsearchable riches of his mercy and grace. They gloried in

his name; and their declaration was,—‘This is the Stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.’

The Holy Spirit ‘brought all things to their remembrance:’ and they were enabled to record the life and doctrine of our Lord, in such a manner as they could not have done without his informing and superintending power. They were enabled to recollect many things which would otherwise have been forgotten, and to understand things which were not understood by them at the time of their occurrence. St. John, xii. 16.

Our Lord, as we have observed, associated with the disciples more or less during the interval between his resurrection and ascension; and that time undoubtedly was well employed. St. Luke informs us, chap. xxiv. 44—48, in what manner He instructed them,—teaching them that in Him the Scriptures of the Old Testament were fulfilled, and that in His Name salvation should be ‘preached among all nations.’ During this period they obtained some clearer knowledge of the Scriptures; some of their prejudices were removed; and they were prepared for the effectual illumination of the Spirit. They acted according to the directions of our Lord; his promise was fulfilled; and then, as we have seen, they stood forth, as by an instantaneous spiritual growth, in all the dignity and excellence which became the Apostles of Jesus Christ.

—How was such a change effected? How could they appear at once the intelligent and courageous witnesses of the crucified, risen, and ascended Saviour? We must ascribe it to the agency of the blessed Spirit. Through this they exhibited correct and profound knowledge, and rose to a remarkable eminence in religious attainments; in faith, love, humility, zeal, and decision. The teaching which they received from above was powerfully influential: and they were no longer worldly and contentious, but spiritually minded and unanimous; inculcating the truths of the Gospel with resistless argument, unquestionable affection, and unwearied perseverance.

Thus, then, we view the disciples before and after the descent of the Holy Spirit upon them. While they intimately associated with our Lord, as his especial attendants, we find them to have been the slaves of various prejudices and passions: as far as they were left to themselves after his crucifixion, they were disconcerted, disappointed, and disconsolate: but no sooner had the Holy Spirit been given them, than we see them exhibiting various excellence;—that knowledge and piety, wisdom and prudence, fidelity and love, which excite our wonder, and win the best feelings of our hearts. In their case, therefore, we see clearly how the Holy Spirit was the effectual Teacher. And,

II. We now consider the subject in reference to ourselves: and here we maintain that the Holy Spirit is the great and efficient Instructor. We offer three observations, grounded on what has

been advanced ; from which it will be evident that we are dependent upon Him for the true and saving knowledge of divine things.


1. We have inestimable blessings and privileges, with regard to our spiritual and eternal interests. We do not see and hear the Lord Jesus Christ, as the disciples saw and heard him : but, with the Bible in our hands, we are admitted, as it were, into intimate society with Him. We can examine the dispensation of redeeming love and mercy, from the first promise in Paradise, through its different stages of development, until the moment when our Lord uttered the deeply significant expression, ‘ It is finished.’ We can compare prediction and fulfilment, type and antitype, and enter, as it were, into the innermost part of the temple of divine truth. The Dispenser of all good has dealt bountifully with us ; for the Sun of righteousness shines upon us with the purest and richest splendour. If we think that the advantages enjoyed by the disciples before our Lord’s crucifixion were great, yet those which we enjoy are incomparably greater. They then saw the work of redemption but feebly and dimly at the most ; for they had been brought up in those views and prejudices which they frequently exhibited. But the whole counsel of God is revealed to us in its spirituality ; and we are so instructed in the Gospel from our childhood, that we expect no worldly eminence from it ; well knowing that its gifts and operations especially relate to the immortal soul. But,

2. The mere possession of outward privileges

does not enlighten the mind and renew the heart. Man has a strong inclination to look only to outward things, and to be satisfied with his own performances. The Jews boasted of their descent from Abraham, of circumcision, and of the law : but did these privileges and their boast of them make them the spiritual children of Abraham—Israelites indeed?—Whether we look to ancient or modern times, to Christian or pagan lands, we have ample proof of man's propensity to be pleased and contented, in religious matters, with what is visible, and tangible, and in his own power : and the more of rite, pomp, and materialism any mode of religion has, the more fitted it is to the taste of the multitude, who are generally ready to substitute mechanism for thought, spirituality, and holiness.

If we attend the ordinances of religion, do we not conclude that, as a matter of course we are Christians ? The distinction between nominal and real Christians we look upon as harsh, uncharitable, and unjust. We settle the thing in a compendious way :—‘ We are Christians already, and what more can we be ?’ But still it is true, that we may attend outward ordinances, and not be truly pious. We may grasp a shadow, and miss the substance. We may be commended by men, and may yet be lightly esteemed by Him who seeth the heart.

Religion may, obviously, be regarded in two ways. It may be made a mere intellectual or speculative matter—a profession—a series of habitual and mechanical attentions to ordinances : Or it may be treated as that which is the light, life, and blessed-



ness of the soul; as that by which man stands in the favour, and is changed into the image, of God. These are different things. The latter does not exclude the former, for the existence of religion in us as a principle implies knowledge and the use of ordinances: but the former does not necessarily imply the latter, since we may have knowledge and use ordinances, and yet be without the vital principle. And here, it is to be feared, thousands of Christians deceive themselves. What conformity is there between the doctrines, principles, and laws of Scripture, and their views, affections, and practice? If there be not some real growing conformity, as to these matters, between the Scriptures and man, how is it possible for any one to regard himself in any other light than as a worldly and lifeless Christian?

Is it not a fact, proved by the temper and conduct, that many Christians derive no saving benefit from their Christian privileges? They keep from heterodoxy, respect sacred ordinances, do many laudable actions, and exhibit many amiable qualities. They win, and deserve, the commendation of those around them. But, with all this, they may be strangers to their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. They may hear of 'the unsearchable riches' of Christ: of the eternal blessedness of the glorified and of the eternal misery of the lost; and yet their bosoms may be a dark region into which no beam of light has penetrated; and a frozen and a death-like region upon which no atom of a warm and thawing and vital influence has ever put forth

its restoring might. And in this case, faith, repentance, love, hope, and all the feelings and movements of holy souls, are altogether unknown and unfelt. But,

3. When we are made partakers of the renewing influence of the Holy Spirit, we undergo and experience a great spiritual change in the frame and bent of our minds and hearts. We do not speak here of the peculiar circumstances that may accompany repentance, or conversion to God: we only maintain, that there is a wide difference between that knowledge of divine things which we may gain by the mere exercise of our own faculties, and that efficient knowledge of them which results from a superadded agency from above. When a man is visited with this divine power, he is no longer satisfied with vague notions and lifeless forms; for he feels that there is a spirituality in religion. As the good work of grace advances, he becomes more enlightened; has new apprehensions of things; and his affections, rising into the sphere of purity, are set on heavenly things. His judgment is decided on the side of piety; and the strong bent of his soul is towards that which is invisible and eternal. Once he carelessly said with his lips, that he was a miserable sinner: but now he feels it, and is humble and contrite. Once he spoke of God with unreflecting fluency: but now he thinks of Him with delight, and speaks of Him with adoring reverence. Once the name of Jesus was forgotten, or but cursorily mentioned: it is now the remembered and treasured name; the basis of his




confidence, and the source of his joy. Once he spoke of duties and virtues with self-admiration: now his language is, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.' The Bible, once disregarded, is the book which he delights to learn and inwardly digest. The house of God, once dull and irksome, is the house of prayer, which he delights to frequent. The world, once his paradise and his all, is now to him a mass of fugitive and seducing shadows which he gladly renounces. Heaven, the abode of life and glory, is the world after which he aspires: and piety is with him that spiritual cause which furnishes him with the best employment, which engages him in the noblest warfare, which inspires him with the purest feelings, and which places the most glorious prize before his enraptured view. He was dark and ignorant, degraded and enslaved, forlorn and destitute: but now he is enlightened, raised, liberated, blest, and comforted. Truth sheds upon his exulting spirit her brightest beams; Mercy blots out his many sins; Grace adorns him with the beauty of holiness; and Power breaks off every fetter, invigorates every faculty, and upholds him, mid foes and dangers, in the path of righteousness. A frail and feeble mortal as he is in himself, yet, by the riches and might of divine goodness, he stands upon a high ground, a little lower than the angels, a child of God, a member of Christ, and an heir of glory.

This great and blessed change is inward and invisible; but the fruits of it are obviously discerned

in the life of the happy individual. He desires, and aims, and strives to live, practically, as a follower of Christ. His piety, therefore, is not lost in the tenuity of speculation or in the remoteness of invisible feeling, but is seen in the integrity of his conduct, and felt in the benevolence of his spirit. We have seen what were the fruits of the divine agency in the case of the disciples: and in like manner will the fruits of that agency be always seen in the case of real converts: for they abandon error and folly, and receive the instructions of wisdom; and they turn from the ways of sin into the way of righteousness and holiness; and they walk in that way, living no longer for worldly pleasures and interests according to the will of man, but for the proper use of their faculties and talents, as creatures born for eternity, according to the will of God.

It is undeniable, that such a parallel may be drawn between the disciples and ourselves as that which we have set before you. They had privileges, and so have we: but their illumination and pious excellence were the result of an especial divine agency; and on the very same agency do our illumination and pious excellence depend. Before this agency be sought and obtained, we spend our days in darkness and in death. If we be learned, we may be philosophers, theologians, critics, theorists, systematizers; but we are not spiritual Christians;—not humble, contrite, self-renouncing believers. If we be unlearned, we may have a few notions, boast of ritual observances and moral pro-



prieties : but we are not spiritual disciples of Christ. Whoever and whatever we are, with many or with scanty endowments and privileges, if we be without the enlightening and enlivening powers of the Holy Spirit, we are inwardly in darkness, though outwardly surrounded with light ; we are dead, though we may think that we live ; we are the slaves of the world, of the flesh, of Satan, and of Sin, though we may account ourselves the possessors of an ennobling liberty ; and we are walking in the downward road to ruin, though we cherish the delusive hope that our path is conducting us to the fields of bliss. But if we be led to consideration and prayer, if we seek and obtain the influence of the promised Spirit, we are enlightened by Him. Where He acts as an Enlightener or Teacher of man's mind, He also acts as a Sanctifier or Renewer of man's heart: we cannot separate the one from the other. And here, be it noticed, is the plain and solid test by which we may distinguish between human and divine illumination : for the former, to whatever extent it may be carried, by superior intellect and favourable opportunities, leaves us in our sin and worldliness ; but the latter produces that entire inward change which is shown by a corresponding outward change,—by the renunciation of sin, and by delighting and abounding in those works of righteousness and benevolence which adorn the gospel, promote the glory of God, and are beneficial to mankind. When we, in the tender mercy of the Most High, are made partakers of this influence, we shall find in our own experience, that

the promise which our Lord gave to the disciples was also a promise given to the Church. There will be a light thrown upon what was obscure : truths neglected or forgotten will be brought to our remembrance : and there will be that application of the whole to the heart which will lead immediately to the most important vital and practical results ; so that we shall have within us a full persuasion of the difference between a nominal profession and a spiritual possession of religion ; between the teaching from above, which changes the very frame of the soul, and the teaching of human schools, which only engages the powers of the intellect in speculation, argument, and controversy. And in this believing and transforming reception of the Gospel, we have a most convincing proof, that the promise of our Lord has been fulfilled in our case, and that it is undergoing in us a progressive and unceasing accomplishment.

In concluding the discourse, we remark,

1. That those who despise, ridicule, or deny divine Agency, are guilty of a gross offence, whether we regard the majesty and goodness of God, or the faculty of reason with which man is endowed. There are many who treat the doctrine as a fancy, dream, or delusion, and who look upon its advocates as imbecile or enthusiastic beings. But the Jehovah of Scripture is revealed to us as Father, Son, and Spirit ; and it is the peculiar office of the Spirit, in the economy of grace, to act upon the souls of men with an illuminating and restoring might. This is one of the great discoveries of re-

velation—one part of the redeeming provision for a perishing race—far above reason, but in no respect contrary to it: and every rightly disposed mind rejoices in the knowledge of a mysterious energy, so worthy of God and so necessary to man. To deny or ridicule the doctrine is to insult Jehovah, and to pervert the noblest faculty of our intelligent nature: and to disregard it, is to pour contempt on the wisdom and goodness of God and to plunge wilfully into perdition.

2. We ought, then, to think most highly of the Holy Spirit and of his operations. Before He acts upon our souls, we are in darkness, and all within us is a spiritual chaos: but when He acts upon them, they become partakers of light and life; and they are reduced into order and embellished with imperishable beauty. Without Him, the ordinances of religion, and even the Bible, effect nothing as to our real health and peace. They may, like a telescope, bring splendid and enchanting scenes apparently nearer to us for a short season; but we are still of the earth, earthy, and the prospects which we contemplate are infinitely distant from us—the matters of a mere intellectual vision. But if the Spirit of truth be poured upon us, we are made partakers of a power by which we not only contemplate a distant glory, but we see the lustre and charms of the Redeemer's kingdom upon earth; and within its hallowed limits, and imbued with, and pervaded by its divine influences, we are preparing for the full magnificence of the world above. Surely, then, the Almighty Teacher and Sanctifier

is worthy of our highest esteem, and his operations demand our most serious thought. But,

3. Let us beware of forming crude notions of spiritual agency. We admire decision in religion ; for almost any thing in it is preferable to apathy. We can pardon the blunders and aberrations of the warm and earnest in that holy cause : but we cannot sanction any impropriety in it,—and much less what is erroneous and delusive. God acts with us as rational, intelligent, and accountable beings. The influences of his Spirit are effectual : they produce a peculiar frame of soul, consisting of right views, sound principles, and holy affections : but we cannot allow the mingling of wild fancies and exorbitant feelings with his operations. Where the fruits of the Spirit are, there He is : and a faith looking unto Jesus, a repentance mourning over sin, an intense desire to do the divine will, cheerful resignation, unruffled meekness, unwearied patience, purifying hope, deadness to the world, spirituality of mind and heart ; are far more convincing proofs of the Holy Spirit's presence and agency, than if we heard voices as loud as thunder, or saw visions as bright as heaven. By forming gay fancies and encouraging lawless feelings, we injure ourselves and dishonour the gospel : let it, therefore, be our care to keep at a distance from what is false, questionable, or absurd. And lastly,

4. We ought to seek the illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit with the utmost earnestness and sincerity. Use all your means of grace, both public and private, always keeping this in view—a spiritual

knowledge of the gospel. ‘ O God the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, have mercy upon us miserable sinners, and effectually instruct us in all things that relate to our salvation ;’—be such your petition when you read the Scriptures, when you go to the house of God, when you enter into your closets, and whenever you meditate upon divine things. Your heavenly Father will hear and answer your request : the Holy Spirit will descend upon you ; and He, the effectual Teacher, will make you experimentally acquainted with the gospel of Christ, in the light of its discoveries, in the riches of its mercy, in the powers of its grace, and in the fulness of its consolations.

SERMON XV.

The Disciples comforted by several animating Considerations.

ST. JOHN, xiv. 27, 28, 29, 30, 31.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father : for my Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you : for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father ; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

If we merely read these verses as forming a part of a conversation, we may readily admit that there is something in them that is peculiarly pleasing and soothing, and that there is also about them a sort of mysterious grandeur : but we shall obtain no definite view of them, and arrive at none of those conclusions which add to our knowledge, and which, if improved, promote our edification, if we

satisfy ourselves with such a vague view and general impression. By such a mode of conduct we neither treat the Scriptures with becoming reverence ; nor do we consult our own benefit. The cursory and superficial inspection of the sacred pages is not that searching them which, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, will make us wise unto salvation. It may increase our pride and security ; but it will not lead to piety, or to growth in piety.


The verses which we are to examine at present conclude the chapter,—which forms one part of the whole discourse, as is evident from the last words of it : ‘ Arise, let us go hence.’ The fifteenth and sixteenth chapters are a resumption and continuation of the discourse : it is disputed where this latter part of it took place : but the most natural supposition seems to be, that it took place, as the preceding part, in the guest chamber, after our Lord and his disciples had risen from table, and previously to their departure. It was one leading object of our Lord to comfort his followers. We shall find, however, on a close consideration of these verses, that He advanced in them several important truths which are, in fact, of a general nature, and which ought to be carefully remembered by us.

I. We shall, therefore, consider briefly the several truths which our Lord advances in these verses.

1. The Lord Jesus Christ gives peace to his faithful people : ‘ Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth give I

unto you.' Such language may be viewed as the familiar form of valediction among the Jews : but it was used by our Lord, not as the mere expression of kind feeling, but as the description and bestowment of a real and invaluable blessing. Peace is a word which in Scripture very frequently comprehends universal happiness and prosperity. To 'have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,' is to have all that can be enjoyed by the soul of man with regard to true happiness : and Peace, the sum of all blessings, is that which Christ bequeathed to his disciples, and also to his Church. He makes a marked distinction between his gift and the gift of the world.

And what, we may ask, is the peace which the world has to bestow upon us ? What is the good ; the enjoyment, or satisfaction which we may derive from worldly objects, or from our fellow-creatures ? We may call a considerable portion of earthly riches our own ; and each of us may say, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years : take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry : ' we may clothe ourselves 'in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day ; ' we may gratify our appetites and desires as we choose. Or we may possess stores of knowledge, and be able to wander in the various fields of science and information : we may be intimately acquainted with all that is lofty and profound ; with all that is vast and magnificent, or elegant and refined. Or we may be eminent among our fellow-men by our birth and rank, and by the




elevated places that we occupy in human society: we are conspicuous and influential, and receive the incense of admiration and flattery. Such things the world has to bestow, with others of a like nature; and the peace or happiness which it imparts to us flows from them. And is the true peace or satisfaction of man to be obtained from wealth, knowledge, grandeur, and such things, however they may be heaped upon him? Surely if we have only such happiness, we have only what is partial, superficial, precarious, and transient.

But the Lord Jesus Christ gives peace to his people: 'My peace I give unto you'—a peace which He procured and which He imparts; a peace entirely different from that of the world—a peace consisting in spiritual blessedness and prosperity—'the peace of God which passeth all understanding.' This peace is grounded upon, and springs up from, the state and character of the soul as a partaker of Christ. 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Are we united to Christ by a living faith? Is our 'fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ?' Is 'the kingdom of God, which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,' established within us? Then we have the peace of Him who is emphatically 'our peace'—a holy tranquillity, a deep composure, a pure blessedness of soul, supreme satisfaction.

Suppose any one to be brought by divine grace to see and feel his misery as a sinful creature, alien-

ated from God. He seeks salvation in the way which the gospel reveals. He receives Christ Jesus the Lord; becomes the temple of the Holy Ghost; lives in subjection to the law of God, delighting in his service, and resigned to his will. Faith, love, and hope, producing humility, spirituality, gratitude, and joy, are the ruling principles within him. This person has peace; the peace of Christ; the peace of true religion; the peace that cannot be materially affected by the fraud or violence of men, by the vicissitudes of life, the lapse of years, or the approach of death. The peace of the world is an illusion, a mere dream; the colours of a rainbow which will quickly fade; the waters of a fountain which will soon be dry: it is only a shadow; and as a shadow it vanishes, and is no more. But the peace of the true believer is real, substantial, and abiding. Our Lord does not promise his followers worldly ease and prosperity; He rather calls upon them to expect various troubles: but He promises them that blessedness, that inward satisfaction, which the world cannot give, or take away. 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you.'

2. The promise of our Lord Jesus Christ ought to banish fear and trouble from our minds. 'Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.' Our Lord refers here to the painful feelings and apprehensions of the disciples, when they heard of his approaching departure from them. It was natural that they should feel anxiety at the prospect



of their future trials, when deprived of his care and guidance. But He assured them that they should enjoy a peculiar peace, and that they ought to banish painful solicitude from their minds.

And let serious Christians attend carefully to this admonition of our Lord. We live in a world in which we are continually liable to distress and perplexity. We see painful changes in the world; we see the gospel opposed, or perverted and abused; we experience severe trials in our own circles; we meditate on our spiritual affairs, and find that they are not so prosperous as they ought to be. We look, in short, to the world without and to the world within, and we are apt to be dispirited. Faith is weak, courage is unnerved, and we feel as though we were sailing on a troubled ocean, and driven about by every wind and wave. But shall we not remember our Lord's promise and admonition? He promises peace to his people, and He enjoins them not to be troubled and afraid. And shall his followers be agitated and dispirited by the storms and clouds, and billows of a transient world? If He says to their souls, 'Peace, be still;' shall they suffer that peace to be destroyed by unbelief and timidity? Can they possibly so forget the goodness, truth, and power of their ever-living Head? Let worldly men be compelled to own that their peace cannot endure the season of trial, and is only felt while the sunshine of temporal prosperity is bright upon their dwellings. But the real Christian ought to show, that the peace from above is not

easily disturbed ; that it is tranquillity midst surrounding turbulence ;—a divine felicity, superior to the accidents of time. And,

3. All the measures adopted by our Lord in the work of our redemption ought to fill us with satisfaction and joy. ‘ Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father : for my Father is greater than I.’ In this last assertion, our Lord speaks of himself as the Son of man, and in reference to his office. He was ‘ equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead ; and inferior to the Father, as touching his Manhood.’ And with respect to his office, he that is sent is inferior, officially considered, to him that sent him.—Our Lord refers in the language before us, to his crucifixion, burial, resurrection, and subsequent ascension to glory : and He teaches them, that in all these measures, which formed so many links in the chain of his redeeming work, they ought to rejoice. This was correct ; for if He had remained with them, they would not have received the great blessings of his kingdom, which were to be conferred as the fruit and proof of his accomplished redemption. The disciples, therefore, ought to have felt satisfied with his separation from them, and even to have rejoiced in that event : and that they did not, only showed that their love of Him did not spring from a proper knowledge of Him and of his work.

And here let the true believer see a source of joy. Our Lord came from the Father, dwelt on

earth, fulfilled his ministry, suffered death, rose from the grave, conversed with his disciples, and ascended to glory : these are the facts of our religion, never to be contemplated but with lively joy and gratitude, as we view them in themselves, in their causes, operations, and results. The personal presence of our Lord upon earth for a time was, according to the divine economy, essential : but the continuance of it was incompatible with the nature of the scheme of redemption. Being now exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, ‘ all power given unto him in heaven and in earth,’ He performs his office as the perpetual Intercessor, and is always present through his Spirit to all his people in every nation and through every age. He began, continued, and completed his stupendous work of love and mercy ; and in the whole of his conduct we see the development of his goodness, power, and truth. Hence we ought to feel the highest satisfaction and delight, while we contemplate Him who is ‘ not entered into the holy places made with hands, which were the figure of the true ; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.’

4. The prophetic declarations of our Lord ought to establish our faith in Him. ‘ And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.’ Our Lord thus prepared the minds of the disciples for the approaching events, that, by comparing his words with them, their confidence in Him might remain unshaken. They were to see Him betrayed, crucified, and buried ; but the very circumstance, that He had

foretold these things, would prevent their being 'offended in him;' for they would see that He was omniscient and worthy of their trust.

And the fact, that our Lord 'told, before it came to pass, repeatedly and circumstantially, what was to befall Him, furnishes us with a clear proof of his fore-knowledge, and thus with a solid argument for our confiding in Him. The Bible, in one point of view, is a book of prophecy: and the history of the world is the fulfilment of its predictions. The conclusion, therefore, is unavoidable, that it proceeds from the all-knowing God, and thus demands our entire confidence. As to the case before us, our Lord foretold what would take place respecting himself; and we know that subsequent events corresponded accurately with his declarations. Our faith in Him rests on solid ground. Cavillers and unbelievers there may be; but the real Christian need not be ashamed of Christ and of his Gospel: and he is always 'ready to give an answer to every man that asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him, with meekness and fear.' And some of his reasons may well be deduced from 'the sure word of prophecy.' Again,

5. Our Lord gave himself up to his enemies for our sake, and triumphed over all of them. 'Hereafter I will not talk much with you; for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.' The personal ministry of our Lord was now to cease: and Satan was to succeed in bringing about his crucifixion. No just accusation could be brought against the holy Jesus: Satan had nothing in Him;

no rightful authority over Him. 'Now,' said our Lord, 'is the judgment of this world : now shall the prince of this world be cast out : And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to me.' Why was our Lord lifted up upon the cross ? We answer, ' That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.' The original assurance, ' It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel,' was now to have a striking fulfilment. Satan had nothing in Christ ; no guilt, to give him rightful power over Him ; no corruption that would yield to any of his temptations : but he was to prevail to a certain extent, and to effect, by prevailing, the condemnation and subversion of his own kingdom. The crucifixion of Christ was brought to pass, according to the determinate counsel of God, by the agency of the great foe and of wicked men. He died, voluntary, the just for the unjust, in the fulness of infinite love and mercy, that we through Him might have redemption ; might be brought near to God, and be blessed for evermore. By dying, rising, ascending to glory, and establishing the gospel in the world, He overcame our deadly foes in his own person ; obtained for all his followers the means of victory over them ; opened the gate of life and blessedness ; and became ' the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.'

This is a most delightful subject for our meditation at all times. The adorable Emmanuel has made peace and reconciliation between the Creator and his alienated creatures. The arts of Satan,

the fell usurper, and of his deluded agents, were altogether in vain. Our Saviour went down to the grave; but He rose victorious, and ‘led captivity captive.’ He ascended to glory, and sent forth another Comforter, the Spirit of truth and grace. The sceptre of Satan was shivered, his throne convulsed, and his supremacy destroyed; for light, life, and power were shed upon a dark, dead, and enslaved world: and myriads of our race have in all ages exultingly proclaimed, ‘God, having raised up his Son Jesus, hath sent him to bless us, in turning away every one of us from his iniquities.’ We contemplate, therefore, our suffering and triumphant Lord, and we look upon our vanquished enemies, and we rejoice with thankfulness in the manifold wisdom and unspeakable goodness of our God and Saviour. Further,

6. Our Lord acted in all his redeeming work on a principle of love to his Father, and in obedience to his will. ‘But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.’—Our Lord here speaks of himself in the character of the Messiah, the Sent of God; and as such He loved the Father, and proved by all his conduct that He acted in perfect conformity with the divine will. ‘Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.’ In the last part of his course upon earth, He did not shrink from his trials, but received the assaults of Satan, endured the malice and violence of men, and calmly submitted to every thing that was necessary for the perfect accom-

plishment of his redeeming work. In his undergoing death nothing was compulsory: it was his own gracious and voluntary act. 'Therefore,' said He, 'doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.' He offered himself to God an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world: but He is also to be regarded, in doing this, as an example of love and obedience. In giving himself a ransom for our lost race, He not only performed a work which was infinitely meritorious, but He likewise exhibited a pattern of perfect piety. He taught his followers, by his own conduct, that true piety is principle and action; is love and obedience; is delight in God and in his will, with a readiness to do whatever He commands, and to suffer whatever He appoints.

II. We offer a few practical remarks on the subject.

1. Does the Lord Jesus Christ offer us peace—a peace which the world cannot give? How, then, can we prefer to this blessed gift the vain, changeable, and perishing peace of the world? The gospel announces peace: peace between God and man: peace in the soul of the individual: peace between man and his fellow-men: peace among the changes, trials, and sorrows of life: peace in the hour of dissolution. How can we possibly set at nought this inestimable donation! Without this peace,

what a miserable creature is man, although smiles adorn his countenance, and music and song resound in his tabernacle ! The men of the world may have mirth and merriment ; but they spend their days in vexation and vanity. But where Christ's peace prevails in the soul, man is happy : in the spirit of adoption he can look to God as his Father : his cherished temper is that of the lamb and of the dove : and his anticipation of eternity is the anticipation of perfect blessedness. O renounce your errors and delusions : renounce the vanities and follies of the world : and seek that peace which is only to be found in the exercise of faith and in the cultivation of holiness.

2. Does the Lord Jesus Christ admonish us to lay aside our troubles and fears ? Why, then, if we truly believe in Him, should we make our days dark, and our spirits sad, by melancholy reasonings and painful apprehensions ! He has all power in heaven and in earth. He orders, rules, and guides all things. With such a persuasion, knowing that nothing is above his power, and nothing beneath his notice ; and that He looks upon all his people, the highest and the lowest, with a watchful and gracious eye ; the impropriety, or rather the sinfulness, of distrust and perplexity, is evident. The Church may be beaten by winds and waves : but He whom winds and waves obey is in the vessel. The Christian may be sometimes in a dreary wilderness : but the Chief Shepherd is always near : and shall the feeblest of his flock tremble in dismay ? No : peace is the gift of Christ to every true

believer: let him, then, not mar the gift by the workings of a fearful and distrustful mind: rather let him remember that he is safe in the hands and in the guidance of Him who is infinite in wisdom, power, goodness, and truth.

3. Does the Lord Jesus Christ declare that his measures as our Redeemer ought to fill us with joy? Surely, then, it becomes us to make ourselves acquainted with his measures, and to imbibe and maintain that happy frame of mind with which all those measures are calculated to inspire us. He has done all things well. Behold him in every stage of life, from Bethlehem to Calvary; listen to his words and observe his actions; view him in public and in private: and you must feel the highest satisfaction. He is now the ascended and glorified Saviour. We do not see him; but we know that He is at the right hand of God, our Advocate and Intercessor. He governs all things for the benefit of his people; and gives all spiritual blessings to the humble and earnest worshipper; and will finally receive his faithful servants to himself. Contemplate his redeeming work, what He has done, is doing, and will do; and who can refuse to cherish the most happy feelings. Guilt removed, sin pardoned, enemies vanquished, holiness imparted, the favour of God enjoyed, and a glorious and eternal heaven in prospect;—think of these things, and ‘Rejoice in the Lord always.’

4. Did the Lord Jesus Christ declare truth, and foretell events, that our faith in Him might be unshaken? We know that all events corresponded

perfectly with his declarations and predictions : and shall we not steadfastly repose in Him ? Shall we not be fully persuaded that all his words will be accomplished ? He has given us the strongest proof, that He is omniscient, almighty, and true : and shall we not go forward in his name, and glory in his cross, convinced that He will never forsake us, but defend us amid the dangers, and guide us through the perplexities of this disordered world to the fields of the everlasting Canaan ? He is great and glorious, and we cannot be ashamed of him : He is mighty and true, and we cannot distrust him.

5. Did the Lord Jesus Christ suffer for us, and triumph over all enemies ? Let us contemplate his sacrifice and victory, his goodness and power, with adoring and joyful minds. Sin and guilt, corruption and weakness, Satan and the world, death and the grave, condemnation and hell, are words of melancholy and awful import ; such as may well fill us with dismay. To whom shall we look for relief ? To a crucified, risen, and ascended Saviour : for in Him we have life, health, consolation, and peace ; in Him we have salvation. We behold the blessings of redemption ; we gladly receive the tidings of great joy ; and we feel the virtue of faith and the animation of hope. O never be satisfied with merely hearing of Christ's sacrifice and victory, but earnestly seek the divine grace that you may know them spiritually and experimentally ; looking to his blood, and obtaining peace ; partaking of his Spirit, and obtaining victory over every enemy of your souls. Be careful that you live in this believ-

ing and in this victorious manner, that, your earthly course being ended, your inheritance may be in the world of glory where He is.

6. Did the Lord Jesus Christ, in the execution of his redeeming work, set forth his love of the Father, and his obedience to his will? While we glory in Him as our Redeemer, let us look to Him as our Example. Let the love of God in Christ be our principle, and obedience to his laws our employment and delight. We profess to be disciples of Christ: if we are such in reality, we must act upon principle, and by rule, as He did. Unless we love God and observe his laws, our pretensions to piety are delusive and vain: for we do not belong to Christ unless we are, through divine grace, in some measure such as He was.

We would thus urge you to seek the peace which Christ gives; to live in the composure and serenity of a true faith; to derive your joy and happiness from the redeeming work of our Saviour; to repose in Him with entire confidence; to glory in Him as our triumphant and exalted Redeemer; and to imitate Him in love and obedience. On the full experience of these things your present and eternal happiness depend. The gospel of Christ, heard from the preacher, or read of in books, or speculated upon in your own minds, may amuse and please you for a season: but it is that gospel, in the riches of its mercy and in the power of its grace, brought home to the heart, and followed up in the life, by an influence from above, that insures the welfare of your immortal souls. Seek and ob-

tain this enlightened, spiritual, and practical piety, and then rejoice in the pure consolation of the gospel, and show to all around you, that piety is happiness and joy, as well as salvation; not only an immovable rock on which you build your hopes, but also, at the same time, a mild, a blest, and a cheering sunshine, surrounding and settled upon your souls, in which they see aught of heaven's light, and feel aught of heaven's bliss.

SERMON XVI.

The Vine and the Branches.


ST. JOHN, xv. 1—8.

I am the Vine, and my Father is the Husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

OUR Lord had spoken of spiritual union; of the union between the Father and Himself, and the union between Himself and his people. He resumes the latter subject in this chapter, and illustrates it by a parable which He applies to the disciples, in-

culcating also, by various arguments, the duties which arise from it. In the first and second verses of the text, we have the parable; and in the six following verses we have a part of his application of it. In the parable three things are to be noticed, the Vine, the Husbandman, and the Branches. The vine, a pleasant and feeble plant, is the emblem of our Saviour, weak as to his human nature, but the Source of life and consolation. The Husbandman represents our heavenly Father, to whom the vineyard of the Church belongs, and who makes it the object of his especial care. The branches represent Christians;—Christians of very different character and destiny, all of whom are said to be in Christ. With regard to the application of the parable, we have a repeated honourable testimony to the character of the disciples; in the second place one great branch of their duty is stated, ‘Abide in me, and I in you;’ and in the third place, this duty is urged upon them, as being essential to their abounding in good works; as being connected with the success of their prayers, and also with the glory of God and Christ’s approbation of them.

I. Let us here form an idea of the Church. We contemplate it under the image of a vineyard. The Jewish Church was represented under the same image: ‘My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill.’ Since the advent of Christ, all the Gentiles by whom the Gospel is known and professed, are the vineyard of God. A vineyard has a vine in it: and in the spiritual vineyard the Lord Jesus Christ is the vine: and God may be said to




have planted this Vine in our world when He sent his Son to take our nature upon Him, and when He associated with men. To this Vine we apply the language of the Psalmist, 'Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars.' But a vine has branches; some of them healthy, strong, and fruitful; and others feeble, barren, and only abounding with leaves. The branches are the emblems of Christians—of those who profess to be the disciples of Christ. Further, a vineyard requires careful and skilful culture, and therefore a Vine-dresser. The Church is 'God's husbandry;' his eye is, in an especial manner, upon it; and his wisdom and power, his measures in providence and in grace, are displayed in the culture of his vineyard.—We reflect,

1. On the Branches; that is, on Christians. These are divided into two classes, the fruitful and the unfruitful: and both are said to be in Christ.—Every true Christian is a branch in Christ—a fruitful branch in Him. 'I am the Vine, ye are the branches.' This image teaches us the close union that subsists between the Redeemer and his faithful people. Our Lord had previously asserted this union in very explicit terms: 'Ye in me, and I in you:' and He here explains or illustrates it by a reference to a familiar and pleasing object. The union between the literal vine and its branches is of the most intimate kind, so that both together form one tree. The vine without the branches

would be a solitary and unsightly stem : and the branches separated from the stem or trunk would quickly languish, wither, and die : but let both be united, and we behold a tree which always excites the most agreeable feelings. The branches derive from the parent stock life, vigour, growth, beauty, and fruitfulness.—In this material union we are here taught to consider the spiritual union between Christ and his people. He is the Vine ; the Supporter of the branches, and the Source to them of life and energy : that is, true believers are branches in Him, and derive every spiritual blessing from Him. The growth of the soul in grace, its moral beauty, and its fruitfulness in all righteous plans, words, and works, result from this close and living union ; a union not physical, as in the case of the vine and the branches, but spiritual and effectual, congruous to the nature of immaterial things ; a union so intimate and essential as to be represented by a physical union, than which none can be more strict and close.

These true Christians are purified by the truth. ‘Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.’ The doctrines of Christ, when rightly received, possess and exert a purifying efficacy : hence we read, that ‘Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it ; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.’ How little attention in general is given to the word of Christ ! How obstinately and fatally do men retain their errors and prejudices ! But what is essential to the welfare of man ? Not merely to have




right views of evangelical truth, but to receive the truth in such a manner as to be sanctified by it. Where it is rightly received, it never fails to act with a purifying influence on the whole of man—his heart and conduct. This is experienced by every true believer; and it is more deeply and largely experienced by him as he advances in a healthful and prosperous piety. He is separated from the world; abhors the sin and folly which he formerly looked upon with indifference, or in which he delighted; and hungers and thirsts after righteousness.—Thus we have here a most interesting view of the true followers of Christ: they are united by many and by the closest bands to their living Head, and they are holy characters; the latter fact being the result of the former.

But we must briefly consider the case of unsound Christians. In the literal or natural vine there are useless branches: they may have a luxuriant growth, be adorned with leaves, and make a pleasing appearance. And in like manner there may be in Christ many professors of his name and of his gospel who produce no good fruit. They are in Christ as visible members of his Church, as baptized persons, as hearers of his word: but yet they are not in him spiritually and vitally. They may have notions of Him, and imaginations about Him; but they do not derive from Him a transforming, new-creating power. They produce their own fruit—wild grapes.—Lay this subject to heart; and remember that although there is a sense in which you are in Christ, and you may be thinking highly

of yourselves on the ground of that relation, yet at the very same time you may not be in Him to the salvation of your souls. To be in Christ as a professor of his religion, and so to be in Him by a true and living faith as to be a partaker of Him, are different things. How many ruin their souls by not duly attending to this manifest difference! But we observe,

2. The Culture of the vineyard. He who has a choice vine will carefully watch over it and attend to it: and this is what God does towards the Church. Are there unfruitful branches in the Vine? He is a God of patience and forbearance: but if his goodness fail to lead the sinner to repentance, the day of righteous severity will come. 'Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away.'—But there are fruitful branches in the Vine: and these need the care of the Husbandman. What is the conduct of God? 'And every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.' The promising branches of the natural vine require the care of a skilful person, who knows how to prune and to guide them. Thus too the prosperity and fruitfulness of the Christian depend on divine culture; without which he may grow wild in his notions and feelings, be irregular in conduct, or fall down and lie helpless on the ground. God uses various means, the ministry of his word and the dispensations of his providence, to promote the welfare of his people. He thus corrects their mistakes, removes their imperfections, calls forth their princi-



ples and affections into action, purifies their hearts, improves their conduct, and forms their character. There may be at times an apparent severity in his proceedings towards them : but his discipline is that of a gracious and wise Father, by which, to his glory and to their own happiness, they are made trees of righteousness.—But,

II. We proceed to consider the Duty of Christians. We view this,


1. With respect to inward or spiritual religion. ‘Abide in me, and I in you.’ We view the language of our Lord as conveying a twofold command. ‘Make it your constant care that our mutual union be preserved without interruption : as you are in me, be careful that you abide or continue in me : and as I am in you, be careful that I abide or continue in you.’ Although this inward piety is not the whole of piety, yet it is the foundation of all true excellence, and therefore it is of primary importance. A theological disputant may display his knowledge and skill : but what are mere speculation and debate ? The essential things are, to be in Christ and to abide in Him. Our faith in Him, as our Prophet, Priest, and King, must be steadfast and permanent. Whatever be the reasonings and cavils of the proud and perverse, we must always look to Him as our light, life, and salvation. And, further, let us look well to this, that Christ abide in us by his word as our light, and by his Spirit as our Sanctifier. If we look to ourselves, to our own virtues and works ; if we adopt any vain opinions ; if we practise any sin ; what is

this but to reject Christ, and to drive him far from us? Hence the duty of the Christian is manifest: he must live by faith, and he must live in light and holiness; for thus only can he abide in Christ, and Christ in him. Let our reasonings about perseverance be what they may, our duty is to be always persevering. If we be yet without Christ, let us seek to be in Him. If we be in Him, let it be our first and chief care to abide in Him. Instead of attending to reasonings that may carry us far from the realities of piety, let us daily pray that we may be in Christ; and that, being in Him, we may abide in Him by faith and love, and that He may abide in us by his word and Spirit. But what,


2. Is the Duty of Christians as to Conduct? It is true, we have here no direct injunction about our practice: but, then, the whole passage breathes, to speak so, of action; for mention is made of fruit, of much fruit, of more fruit: and the production of this is stated to be the object of the divine culture, and as being that by which God is to be glorified. If this be duly considered, the unspeakable importance of obedience cannot be questioned by any one: and we wish to see you Christian moralists. But how will you become such? Not by hearing declamations on vice and virtue. Christian morals are the practical results of spiritual causes—of divine truth really understood and received, and of divine principles really possessed and exercised. The tree does not grow unless it be planted in the ground: the soul has no spiritual growth unless it

be in Christ. The branch does not bud, blossom, and produce fruit, unless it be in the tree : and the soul, unless it be in Christ, does not glow with holy feeling, bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, and abound in them. The spirituality of religion, all its internal influences and operations, are essential to that integrity of conduct which the follower of Christ is to maintain : or, in other words, union with Christ and abiding in Him, are not only necessary to our life, pardon, and peace, but also to true Christian morality. Not a single atom will that morality weigh in the scales of Heaven, though it be bright in human view, and though it be loudly extolled by the lips of men, which was not the fruit of that divine influence which the soul derives from its union with Him who is the source of all vital and sanctifying influence.

We maintain, that the sound believer is also the sound moralist : and he who is not a sound moralist cannot be a sound believer. We do not value the branches of the vine for their leaves, shade, and pleasing appearance, but for the rich clusters which they produce. In like manner, we do not value the Christian merely for his thoughts, feelings, and words, however sublime, amiable, or correct they may be, but for his holy and useful life, for his regulation of himself and of his family by Christian rules, and for his works of faith and labours of love. If, therefore, any of you cherish a prejudice against the gospel, as though it did not demand the purest morality, as well as confer upon you mercy and grace, we call upon you to renounce your error.



Are you delighted to hear of duty and virtue and good works? We are delighted to unfold and inculcate them. We magnify the cross of Christ: and we also magnify the yoke of Christ. We do not look with satisfaction on any one who speaks of the former, unless we have clear proof that he attends to the latter. Man, we say, is born under obligation; born for duty; born for activity and diligence: and no dispensation of mercy can disturb, much less can it annul, the moral relations of the universe. But we strenuously contend, that man's own mechanical morality is never to be mistaken for the spiritual morality which God requires of his creatures,—for all that right practice, we mean, which proceeds from holy principles and motives and aims. The principles of religion must be planted in the soul, before any one can lead that life which is holy and obedient in the divine estimation; for 'a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.' We, therefore, preach the spiritual things of religion as the foundation of the true Christian character; and we preach the morality and virtues of religion as the superstructure of that character. To one class of our fellow-men we say, 'Repent, believe, seek union with Christ:' and to another class of them we say, 'Fruit, more fruit, much fruit; for thus ye shall be acknowledged by Christ as his disciples.' If, then, you disregard the gospel, as though it undervalued morality, you cherish a prejudice which is unjust in itself, and fatal in its issue. If any of you repose on the mercy of the gospel, and disregard the universal service which it



requires, you awfully abuse it, to your shame and ruin. But,

III. We advance a few remarks on the Inability of the true Christian to produce the fruits of piety without an abiding union with Christ. 'As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me.' 'For without me,' or separate from me, 'ye can do nothing.' The doctrine of human inability, here asserted, is peculiarly offensive to men in general, and is considered to be of dangerous tendency with regard to morals. Many delight to expatiate on the intellect, reason, will, and conscience of man; and on his capacity for moral improvement: and they seem to insinuate, that the gospel gives a false estimate of human nature. An intelligent Christian will not deny the natural powers of man: and the sound philosopher will not deny their weakness, disorder, and inefficiency. The former must admit that man is a responsible being: the latter must admit that he is a depraved and disordered being. Both parties, if they would advance what is true and useful, should contemplate the whole of the case, and not reason from a part of it. The believer will then grant, that man has intellect, conscience, will, and all that belongs to a moral agent: and the philosopher will grant that every faculty of man is impaired, enfeebled, corrupted. Such is the state of man; and hence divine grace is essential for the moral restoration of the soul,—both in the commencement and in the prosperous continuation of the restoring process. In the language of Scrip-

ture, we must be in Christ, and abide in Him. We can only say to those who oppose such a statement, that they may as justly expect buds, leaves, blossoms, and fruit to be produced by a branch that is severed from the parent tree, as they may expect true holiness and righteousness in man while separate from Christ.

With regard to serious Christians we would remark, that our Lord did not flatter the pride of his followers with a disquisition on their natural endowments; but taught them their weakness, and their entire dependence on himself. As the good work of religion in the soul begins in the effectual operations of grace, so it is maintained in it by the same agency through the whole of life. The natural man may acquire knowledge, profess religion, adorn himself with many virtues, and perform many commendable actions: but he has no inherent power to renew himself after the divine likeness. He, also, who has gone to a certain extent in religion, may retain his speculative views, and use the dialect of piety; but unless he abide in Christ, and Christ in him, his religion will soon be nothing but speculation and dialect. The words of our Lord, 'Without me,' or separate from me, 'ye can do nothing,' may excite prejudice in one quarter, and call forth sophistry in another; but the true Christian sees in it a fact which teaches him his own poverty and the sufficiency of the Saviour. Nor can he ever look abroad into this beautiful creation, and see on the one hand flourishing branches and sparkling flowers, and see on the other hand wither-

ing branches and fading flowers, without being reminded of scriptural truths—the inability of man, and the riches of the Redeemer : and he will cherish the humbling conviction, that apart from Christ he can do nothing ; and the joyful conviction, that being in Christ he can do all things. We speak a few words,

IV. On the Encouragement and Motives which the true Christian has to maintain an abiding union with Christ.

1. Does he wish to abound in good works ? He certainly ought to be zealous of these, whether he regard the glory of God, the honour of the gospel, the benefit of mankind, or his own comfort and satisfaction. Will he not wish at the close of life to have the conviction, that he has not been a mere cumberer of the ground ? Would he be accounted, when he stands before the tribunal of his Judge, a good and faithful servant ? Practical piety is essential to your usefulness, comfort, and honour. But abiding in Christ is essential to practical piety. Only by the maintenance of that union can any one produce fruit, more fruit, much fruit. Again,

2. Does he wish that his prayers may be answered ? He knows that communion with God, and that blessings from above, are essential to his spiritual welfare. He knows that prayer is the channel of communication between heaven and earth. And what are the words of our Lord ? ‘ If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.’ These words, after proper limitations have

been applied to them, afford the highest encouragement to the humble believer with regard to prayer: and they contain the strongest motive to induce him to attend with a jealous care, to his abiding union with Christ. We are to pray: but if we would receive the blessings promised to prayer, we must abide in our living Head. Further,

3. Does he wish to promote the glory of God, and to have Christ looking upon him with complacency, and acknowledging him? Surely all this is what every true Christian earnestly desires. But it is by good works that he is to glorify God; and it is only by abiding in Christ that he can do good works: and it is only by abounding in good works, that we are approved by Christ as his true disciples. Does He look with delight on unfruitful branches; or will He acknowledge them as true branches in Himself? He did the will of his Father: and surely those who most closely copy his own example are those whom He views with satisfaction.

But let it suffice to say, without enlarging on the subject, that the true Christian has the greatest encouragements and the strongest inducements to attend to his union with Christ: for the whole of spiritual and of practical piety depend upon it. No further is there life in the soul, and true excellence in the conduct, than as we are branches abiding in Christ. We live in an evil world; and the wild boar of the forest would fain destroy the vine, and the foxes would spoil the tender grapes: but let us look well to our views and principles, guard against

the force, fraud, and malice of our enemies, and maintain our spiritual union unbroken.—But we conclude the discourse : and we would ask,

1. Are some among you thoughtless persons as to religion ? You respect it and its holy ordinances : but Christ as the true Vine, and the Father as the Husbandman, and yourselves as branches in the Vine—these are subjects to which you are yet strangers. You do not understand the spiritual and practical life of the true Christian. You are not vitally in Christ ; nor is He in you ; nor do his words abide in you ; nor is God glorified by you in your lives ; nor does Christ account you his disciples. We exhort you to study the text ; and there learn the plain but deep lessons of piety : and pray for the Holy Spirit, that you may be made living and fruitful branches in the true Vine.

2. Are some among you unfaithful and inconsistent Christians ? You are familiar with the doctrines of the gospel, delight to hear them, and speak of them with readiness. Where, we ask you, is spiritual life ? Where are the fruits of righteousness ? Where are the proofs of your union with Christ ? If you be cold and dry characters, your religion is little more than mere notion. If you be warm and feeling characters, it is rather the fever of excitement than the glow of real life. Consider, we beseech you, that an unsound religion is mockery and delusion. Awake, arise, before it be too late : turn from the specious profession of godliness to the pure realities of it ; lest you be condemned at last as hypocrites.

3. Are some among you feeble and dispirited persons? You desire to be faithful disciples of Christ, and to enjoy the consolations of the gospel. But you cherish dark thoughts and desponding feelings. You hesitate to account yourselves true Christians. What do we say to you? Look unto Jesus, and be diligent and patient, prayerful and circumspect. The stem, bud, leaf, blossom, and fruit do not appear in a single day. Some branches in a tree may shoot forth with rapidity: but time, with the sunshine, rain, and dew of heaven, will make even feeble branches strong, flourishing, and fruitful. Seek the influences of the Comforter; be not weary and faint in your minds; use carefully your means of grace; and meekly wait the divine will. Thus your knowledge will increase, your faith will be strengthened, and your peace and satisfaction will abound.

4. Are some among you mature Christians? None are so mature as not to need the remembrance and study of the text. Contemplate with lively gratitude your union with Christ: but remember your dangers, and be cautious; remember your duty, and be diligent. Beware of cold speculation and dry profession: beware of curious novelties and idle fancies: beware of sin and inconsistency. As branches in Christ, see that your spiritual life be derived from Him; and that this spiritual life, prevailing in you more and more, be uniformly proved and exhibited by all the fruits of the Spirit—by inward holiness and outward obedience. ‘The righteous shall flourish like the

palm-tree : he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age ; they shall be fat and flourishing : To show that the Lord is upright : he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.' Ps. xcii. 12—15.

SERMON XVII.

Happiness and Duty of Believers.

ST. JOHN, XV. 9—17.

As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you : continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants ; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth : but I have called you friends ; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain : that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another.

IN these verses the practical application which our blessed Lord made of the parable of the Vine is

continued. In the parable itself He sets forth the union which subsists between Him and his true followers: and He then states the duties resulting from that union;—abide in me, continue in my love, and love one another. We have here, therefore, a most pleasing development of the spiritual and practical nature of piety. Let the careless consider it, as it is delineated by our Saviour, and no longer treat it with neglect and indifference: and let the serious consider it more attentively, and be urged to cultivate it with greater fidelity and care. What, we may ask, are all the most splendid pages of human philosophy when compared with a few of the sayings of Jesus! We may be pleased with the acuteness, taste, and eloquence of the reasoning sage: but the unelaborate effusions of our Redeemer's heart open to the soul of man the most splendid discoveries, produce in it the noblest and happiest feelings, and fill it with delight, peace, and satisfaction.

I. Let us consider the Happiness of true Believers.

1. They are partakers of the love of Christ. He loved his disciples; and He loves his faithful followers of every realm and age. We have here two ideas with regard to his love of them.—1. He asserts, 'As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you:' and he advances a proof of the Father's love towards himself: 'The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.' The Father loved the Son from eternity: and with what complacency did He look upon Him while He was

engaged in the work of redemption here on earth! 'Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.' Now this love of the Father is what our Lord uses to represent his own love of his people; a love most exalted and intense; unchangeable, unfailing, and perfect. 'As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.'—2. A second idea of the love of Christ for his people may be taken from these words; 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' The love of man has in some rare instances been shown in a readiness to die for a friend: but Christ laid down his life for us 'while we were yet sinners.' Here we see his love to man; and here we may form some notion of his peculiar love of those who truly believe in Him. Though He is enthroned in glory, yet his tender affections are towards them, and He looks upon them with complacency. Despised, or destitute, or afflicted they may be: but let them remember Christ and his love. He loved them unto death; his love does not change; and He always regards them with affection and sympathy. And surely those who have the love of Christ resting upon them, may calmly endure the trials and sorrows of this transitory state.

2. True believers are a source of joy to the Redeemer, and they have abundant joy in themselves. 'These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.'—Our Redeemer has joy in his believing people: 'that my joy might remain in you.' Our


Lord is pleased when He sees the steadfast attachment of his people to himself, and their holy conversation in the world. In them He sees those who glorify God, adorn the gospel, shine as lights in the world, and shall celebrate his praise for ever. The Church is an object of delight to the Most High. 'The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save; he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing.' What exalted and happy persons are they whose characters and conduct are such, that they are contemplated with joy by the Redeemer amidst the glory of the mediatorial throne!—But they also have abundant joy in themselves: 'And that your joy might be full.' They have joy from having that faith which produces true happiness in the soul. The Gospel of Christ makes us happy, by bringing us near to God in a state of reconciliation, and by renewing us unto holiness and obedience. In ourselves we are miserable sinners; and miserable, because we are sinners. The world is full of wretchedness and woe, because it is full of sin and folly. Men seek for joy; but they seek for it in wrong ways, and at wrong fountains: and the result of their schemes, efforts, and labours is vexation and sorrow. But the true Christian has real joy—joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ; peace and joy in believing, and in the Holy Ghost. He knows the way of life, and walks in it. He has abandoned sin and vanity, and forsaken the thoughtless multitude. His delight is in God, in his word, in divine things, and in the society of the excellent. Glorious

prospects lie before him, boundless as the heavens, and durable as eternity. Imperfection belongs to all below : but imperfect as he is, more or less, in all respects, his portion is the portion of the righteous, and his satisfaction in piety is great. If he is familiar with the language of complaint, he is also familiar with that of praise and thanksgiving.—Thus, then, does the Redeemer rejoice over his people, and they rejoice in Him. But,

3. True believers are the friends of Christ. ‘Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants ; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth : but I have called you friends ; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.’ —With what delight must the disciples have heard this gracious address ! If the blessed Jesus enlighten our minds by his word and spirit ; if He make known to us the merciful counsels of God, and purify our hearts ; and if we walk according to his laws ; we are of the number of those whom He regards as friends : and what more noble and endearing title can we possibly possess ! True friendship between man and man, is a treasure ; the source of comfort and advantage ; the balm of life. How, then, can we think too highly of friendship with Christ ; of the participation of his love, esteem, and sympathy ! And this friendship, begun in time, and to be perpetuated through eternity, is the portion of the truly pious : and the right contemplation of this fact will at all times contribute largely to their true happiness.

4. Real Believers are separated from the world, to be a peculiar people. 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.' With regard to the disciples, our Lord addressed to them, when engaged in their humble employments, his gracious invitation, 'Follow me;' and they became his intimate associates. Thus they were chosen and separated from their countrymen. And with regard to true believers, they 'are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people.' But they would never have chosen Christ, if his Spirit had not effectually wrought on their minds and hearts. It is by divine grace that they are what they are. To this they readily and thankfully ascribe their faith, repentance, conversion to God, and separation from the world. Had they been left to themselves, they would have continued in self-sufficiency and unbelief, in worldliness and disobedience. But the eye of mercy was cast upon them, the words of truth were heard by them, a secret power acted upon them, they came to themselves, and they returned to their heavenly Father. They were thus rescued from the dominion of sin and error, and brought into the path of righteousness and holiness, life and peace: and by the purity of their faith and the integrity of their conduct they prove, that they are of the number of Christ's chosen people. Further,

5. The prayers of true believers are heard and answered. 'That whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.' This assurance must have been highly consolatory to the




disciples: and why should it be less so to us? Every true believer is a person of prayer. His petitions are offered up to God in the name of the only Mediator; in entire dependence on his merits and intercession: and they are accepted and answered. They ascend on the wing of faith to the throne above; and they return in those blessings which it seems good to infinite Wisdom to bestow upon the humble worshipper; not, perhaps, those which they may directly solicit, but those which are essential to their real prosperity. It is their joy and comfort to know, that, whatever be their wants and sorrows, there is a throne of grace to which they may come boldly, and obtain mercy, and find the seasonable assistance of grace and goodness.

Such, briefly, is the happiness which is enjoyed by the true followers of Christ; a happiness large and pure; the deep, calm peace of the soul.

II. We now consider the duty of real Believers.—Our Lord made no separation between privilege and duty; between the blessings and requirements of the gospel. ‘Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.’ The inward and the outward, the spiritual and the practical part of piety are so conjoined, that they cannot exist independently of each other.—Three practical matters are here presented to our notice.


1. Perseverance in the love of Christ. ‘Continue ye in my love.’ ‘If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.’ The love of Christ rests on his faithful followers:

and it is their duty to believe and act in such a manner that his love may always rest upon them. He was the especial object of the Father's love; and his words show us, that He continued to be the object of his love because He did his will: that is, his obedience to the commandments of his Father was the means of his continuing to be the object of his supreme affection. We are here taught, then, to follow the example of Christ himself: for as by obedience to the Father He remained in his Father's love, so we by obedience to the commandments of Christ are to abide in his love; are to be those whom He loves and in whom He delights. In vain do we speak of what we have been, or presume ourselves to have been: the great matter is, what we are habitually in our spiritual frame and in our conduct. We possibly may remember a season when we thought, that we had good reason to conclude that we were the objects of Christ's love, and when we took to ourselves the consolation of such an assurance. But whatever there might have been of reality in the case, and of validity in the conclusion, the former experience is of no worth unless we are so ordering, uniformly, the whole of our conversation, with such rectitude and watchfulness, as that the love of Christ may be always resting upon us. Recollections of the past are nugatory, or worse, unless we have the testimony of our consciences that we are striving to be in all respects those characters which He approves and loves. His former love, supposing it were enjoyed, if it have been forfeited by sin and negligence, af-



fords no ground for present satisfaction. Speculations about perseverance are of no value : but it is of infinite moment to the believer that he do persevere. Aware of enemies and of inherent corruption, and dreading a forfeiture or alienation of the love of Christ, it is his duty to look well to himself, to his heart and practice, that he may really move in that course in which the love of Christ rests upon the soul, even as the sunshine upon the face of this goodly creation.

2. Obedience to the laws of Christ. ‘ If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love ; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.’ ‘ Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.’ ‘ I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.’ In the last verse our Lord refers to the labours of the disciples as the preachers of the gospel : but all true Christians are the workmanship of God, ‘ created in Christ Jesus unto good works.’ To persevere in the enjoyment of the love of Christ is to persevere in the careful performance of his commands : for unless we are obedient, his love does not abide on us, and we are not his friends. He is our Example. The love of the Father (xiv. 31.) was his principle of action ; and He proved his love of Him by obeying his laws : and, in like manner, we are to love, and to prove our love by cheerful and uniform obedience. Our Lord did not do his own will, but the will of Him by whom He was sent into the world : and we are not to do our own will, or to be led by




our own desires, but to submit with gladness to the authority of our Saviour. Thus, we may observe, is the gospel a religion of principle and of practice; a religion of light, energy, and rectitude.

If we be true Christians, then, we cannot be standing idle in the market-place. We have been hired. We have entered into the vineyard. We are bearing, in our allotted places, the burden and heat of the day. We are producing fruit; even that which will remain, and which will be acknowledged in the last day. Our piety is not mere notion and feeling, but a laborious service in which we are endeavouring to promote the glory of God by doing his will. We have talents to improve; and our spheres are spheres of duty: nor will the hour ever come in which we may justly assert, that we have nothing to do. The happiness of the real Christian is great: but while it flows from Christ, the fountain-head of all spiritual blessings, it is to be found only in the path of obedience. And happy is he who, leaving intricate speculations and angry disputes to others;—who, not perplexing himself with the novel opinions that rise, and sink, and rise again to employ the intellects of the curious;—cleaves to the plain truths of the gospel as they are found on the inspired page; and prays for the pure principles and affections of a genuine godliness; and employs all his faculties and powers in agreement with the divine law.

3. The cultivation and maintenance of Mutual Love is a duty incumbent on the followers of Christ. This is my commandment, That ye love one an-


other, as I have loved you.' ' These things I command you, That ye love one another.' Our Lord is an example of love in particular, as well as of obedience in general. We readily admit in words, that we ought to love one another : but as to the duty itself, are we not in general deplorably defective ? Do we love one another, and that even as Christ loved us ? To ask ourselves the question, is to fill our hearts with confusion. The blessed Jesus exhibited and demonstrated, by his words and actions, by his life and death, the truth, extent, and intenseness of his love to man before a wondering and admiring universe. And, further, if we be of the number of his true followers, He has revealed himself to us by his word and Spirit ; has made us new creatures, separated us from the world, admitted us into friendship with himself, and made us partakers of inestimable blessings. He has loved us ; and we are to love one another, after that pattern of perfect love which we behold in Him.

True religion is love. It has its origin in the love of God : its operation is, the production of love in the soul of man : and its consummation is, love perfected in the world of glory. The Scriptures speak of love in the most sublime and engaging manner. The Father loves the Son : the Son loves the Father and also his own people : and they love Him and each other. Incompetent as we are fully to comprehend these things in the present state, yet we clearly see, that there is something most elevated and engaging in the spiritual



condition of true believers. By virtue of redemption, there is a union that binds together the spiritual world : and there is a love that pervades the spiritual world, from the height of Jehovah's throne to the depth of the human heart. In the gospel we see how heaven and earth are united : God is united to man, and man to God ; and man also is united to man. We see here how the riches of divine love flow from the Fountain of existence upon the inhabitants of our world, and how they are reflected back from the souls of believing myriads towards its everlasting Source, while it is reflected also by them upon each other. So far as the gospel is known, received, felt, and improved, its fruits are unity, amity, peace, and benevolence. And who can hear and think of this, and refuse to pray for the grace of the Holy Spirit, in order that he may enter truly and deeply into the genuine spirit of our holy faith ?

With respect to the unbelieving world, their great offence is, that they disregard the gospel. If, however, we turn from them to those who profess to receive it and understand it, shall we find that they are honestly attentive to the great Christian law of loving one another ? Are they free from pride, anger, hatred, and uncharitableness ? Are they wholly exempt from envy and jealousy, from unkind surmises and bad feelings, from bitter contentions and violent disputes, from secret heart-burnings, or avowed hostility ? We leave all and each to meditate on the painful and humiliating condition of the Church as to this matter. Happy



is that Christian who, in a day of hate and strife, has the testimony of his own conscience, that his prevailing spirit is not that of corrupt nature, but that which the gospel requires! And we would say, Let every believer, as he regards the prosperity of his own soul, the honour of religion, and the good of mankind, remember what his duty is, and give to the principle of love a complete ascendancy in his heart. Let no unhallowed coals lie smothered within him, ready to burst forth into devouring flames. Let his spirit be kind, tender, affectionate, and forbearing: let his language be modest, wise, and charitable: and let his conduct, in all circumstances and on all occasions, be that which love inspires and wisdom approves. Let the joy of others be his own joy, and the sorrow of others his own sorrow. Let him sympathise with the whole family of man, and do all that is in his power, in his generation, by his plans, counsels, exertions, and prayers, to promote the welfare and happiness of his fellow-creatures. Thus he will love, not in word only, but in deed and in truth: and while he rejoices in the blessedness derived by faith in the redeeming mercy, he will also rejoice in that blessedness which springs from the consciousness of a new nature and the exercise of its pure affections. —But in conclusion,

1. We speak a few words to those of you who have been hitherto thoughtless about your salvation. Read the verses which we have been unfolding to you, and examine yourselves by them. Let each of you ask himself a few plain questions—

‘ Does the blessed Jesus look down upon me with love, delight, and joy? Do I rejoice in Him? Am I separated from the world? Are my prayers accepted and answered? Do I obey the commandments of Christ? Do I love others with unfeigned love? Am I daily persevering in faith, holiness, and obedience—proving my love of the adorable Redeemer by cheerful and universal subjection to Him?’ You can thus examine both the text and yourselves, if you will. You can discover, at least in some measure, what that character is which our Lord describes: and if you exercise a proper measure of faithfulness with yourselves, you will find that this character does not at present belong to you. In fact, you are strangers to these things; and every one of the preceding questions will compel you to acknowledge, that you are far indeed from being that which the gospel requires you to be. We lament your spiritual condition: but what we most lament is, your coldness, indifference, and security in a condition so melancholy, perilous, and awful. We exhort you and intreat you, to consider seriously both what you are and what you are doing; remembering that, however you trifle and presume at present, you cannot always trifle and presume. The day will come in which you shall see, that contempt and neglect of the gospel lead to aggravated condemnation. ‘ Now,’ in the tender mercy of our long-suffering God, ‘ is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation.’ O seriously meditate, ye careless Christians, on your state and character, and look well to yourselves,

that you no longer 'receive the grace of God in vain;' that you so attend to the gospel that we may be to you the savour of life unto life, and not of death unto death. 2 Cor. ii. 15.

2. We speak a few words to the serious and thoughtful. We look upon you as those who have made some solid attainments in true spiritual piety. You have the greatest reason to be thankful: but we call on you to refer to our text, and to learn from it, not only what you in a measure are, but also what you are not, and what you should diligently seek to become. Is there no cause for your being humble, ashamed, and penitent? Is there in your hearts no noxious weed that hinders the growth of love? Are you always living as those whom Christ loves, and who love Him? Are you always obedient to his laws; full of benevolence and good-will? Far from all who are looking unto Jesus be hypocrisy, delusion, and self-deception. Discover, confess, and bewail whatever there be of corrupt nature, and of its bitter fruits, in you and about you. What glory is unfolded to your sight! What blessings have been conferred upon you! What an inheritance is the object of your hope! And yet what imperfect Christians you are! Learn your deficiencies, and not only be contrite before God, but be zealous, diligent, faithful, and earnest in seeking far higher attainments than you have yet made in the Christian life. Let the whole compass of spiritual and practical piety obtain your closest attention; assured, that, if much be done, there is far more that remains to be done. You

know your resources—the exhaustless treasures of mercy, grace, and wisdom in your living Head. Advance, then, in your holy and righteous course with faith and prayer, with diligence and watchfulness, that a brighter and still brighter lustre may rest on the remainder of your mortal pilgrimage.

SERMON XVIII.

Hostility of the world to real Christians.

ST. JOHN, XV. 18, 19, 20, 21.


If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own : but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you ; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

OUR blessed Lord, having instructed the disciples in the duties by which, their union with Him was to be maintained, proceeds to fortify their minds against impending trials. He had, in fact, prepared them to act with diligence in building up the spiritual edifice of the Church ; and He now urges them to endure with patience, and to fight a noble warfare, rising above the hatred of the world, and their own sorrow and pusillanimity. They were to experience the persecution of many adversaries : and this forms the subject of remark through the

remainder of this chapter and the first four verses of the following.

When St. Paul wrote thus to the Corinthians, ‘Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing,’ he gave a direction, or proposed a law, which, as to the spirit of it, must be acted on by the faithful followers of Christ in every age. Let the world think and speak as they choose, yet true Christians are a distinct and separate people, and are exposed, as such, to peculiar trials. It is, therefore, a matter of no small moment to teach them what they have to expect, and how they ought to act, in order that they may proceed in the good way of religion beneficially to others, and comfortably to themselves; that they may be true to their holy cause, and at the same time exercise discretion, and ‘show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.’

The disciples were to go among the Jews and the Gentiles; among the former, who were hostile to every thing which opposed their prejudices, in which they were fortified by an invincible obstinacy;—among the latter, to contend with the proud spirit of disputatious philosophers, with the bigotry of a mercenary priesthood, and with the corruptions of a ferocious multitude. But the gospel is our religion: we profess to be Christians. Still there is ample room among us for the display of that contrariety which subsists between the spirit of the gospel and that of our sinful nature. The real par-



takers of renewing grace and the mere hereditary professors of the truth, form, spiritually viewed, two distinct bodies : and it is now as true as it ever was, that 'He that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit.'

I. Let us consider the Contrariety that subsists between true Christians and the world. 'Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world.' This declaration of our Lord is descriptive of the disciples as distinct persons from other Jews ; for He had selected them to be his immediate attendants : but, their peculiar designation being excepted, it is as applicable to all true Christians as it was to them. We observe, then, that,

1. The world live in ignorance and unbelief. They are strangers to the doctrines, principles, and laws of the gospel : that is, the majority of Christians do not so study the gospel as to be acquainted with its mercy, grace, spirituality, and holiness. One person may be noted for his learning, and another for his moral propriety ; and yet neither of them may have a just apprehension of divine truth in any of its branches. But what, then, shall be said of those who are destitute of mental culture, and who disregard moral decorum ? Converse with such as are ready to unfold their religious sentiments ; and what a discovery will you make of ignorance, error, and mistake ! Some doctrines have no place in their creed ; and others are distorted and misinterpreted. But they who are without knowledge must be without faith ; for a man cannot believe that which he does not know.

True Christians are not of the world : for they have a scriptural knowledge and a spiritual perception of the gospel and of its discoveries. They know God, themselves, and the way of salvation, and the spiritual and holy nature of true piety. They receive the doctrines of revelation, and are real believers. They have been visited with an enlightening and sanctifying influence. Between their views and feelings and the only standard of truth and excellence, there is that agreement which is continually becoming more and more complete. Again,

2. The world are influenced and ruled by vain maxims and examples. They have, with regard to right and wrong, a sort of conventional statute, of a vague and flexible nature. If they think and act as they judge that others do, they are satisfied with themselves : and the maxims and modes of conduct that prevail around them, are what they appeal to in vindication of their conduct. They do not seem to think it a matter of any moment, to examine whether their maxims are solid, and their modes of proceeding correct. In short, they are not followers of God, but followers of men : Men are their law-givers and models.

True Christians are not of the world : for they meditate on the law of God, and on the example of Christ ; and they refer to these in determining what is right and wrong, excellent and perverse. They desire and strive to regulate their conversation by them. Acknowledging the divine legislation, they do not hesitate to condemn many things

which the world approve, and to approve many things which the world condemn. They examine what God enjoins and requires, and are anxious to be his loyal subjects and faithful servants. Further,

3. The world live for temporal things, and find their chief delight in present pleasures and enjoyments. The wealth, honours, and pleasures of this life are what they value and seek. They confine their view within a small circle, and to a narrow period: and in the decision and zeal with which they pursue their objects, the solemnity and magnificence of the invisible and eternal world are entirely forgotten. Their moral taste is vitiated: it does not comport with the dignity of intelligent creatures. Many of the pleasures and amusements which they account refined and elegant, are as much opposed to reason as they are to religion. It is painful and humiliating to see rational creatures, who ought to find their happiness in God and in his service, eagerly rushing forward in the pursuit of almost every folly and vanity; some wasting life in a succession of gay frivolities, and others in the loathsome degradation of vulgar profligacy. Such, however, is the life of multitudes.

But true Christians are not of the world: for they look to things above. They pass by faith through the veil of a dense materialism, and contemplate things spiritual and immortal: they pass beyond the limits of time, and think of eternity. They see and feel that their life is a short pilgrimage, and that they are only sojourners below. Their

treasures and their hearts are in a better world. They perform their duties as men ; they enjoy with gratitude the portion of good which God allots them ; but they are looking to a nobler state of existence, and the things which prepare them for it are what they account the true wealth of man. They have their enjoyments and pleasures ; but not such as are gross, carnal, and fantastic : for their moral taste is refined. They delight in God and holiness. They turn away, and keep at a distance, from all muddy and polluted streams, and seek the waters of a heavenly fountain. They refuse to gather fading flowers, and seek those which will flourish in immortal beauty in the paradise above. The pure and the eternal is what they value and seek to obtain.

4. The world show in their spirit and conversation that they are earthly minded. Their spirit is worldly. It may be covered with a veil of elegance : many of its tendencies may be restrained and concealed by prudence : or it may exhibit itself in its native deformity. Their conversation agrees with it : and the affairs of life, and the petty incidents of their circle, are the topics of their colloquial eloquence, at home and abroad, from morning till evening. The unvarying current of their language proves what are the centres on which their thoughts are fixed, and by which their emotions are excited. We are not insinuating, that we ought to be always speaking about religion : but certainly we do not converse as Christians, if religion be a cautiously

excluded subject. What Christians are we, if we be ashamed to recognise sacred principles and objects?

True Christians are not of the world : for they rejoice to converse, when it is seasonable, on sacred matters with sedateness, meekness, and freedom. Too often, indeed, we fear, are the coals of celestial fire covered, in their prudence, or cowardice, or remaining worldliness, by the ashes, to speak so, of worldly affairs. But in proportion as they are faithful in their holy cause, they move in a peculiar atmosphere ; and there is something unearthly in their spirit and conversation ; and they show that they are inwardly familiar with things which do not meet the eye of man. And now,

II. We consider the Treatment which true Christians are to expect from the world. Our Lord informed his disciples, that they would experience hatred and persecution among men.

1. Hatred. ‘ If ye were of the world, the world would love his own : but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.’—The truth of these declarations, with regard to the disciples, is so obvious, that we need not enlarge upon them in that view. It may, however, be observed, that with regard to men in general, they wish to have their maxims and proceedings sanctioned by those around them. But the life of a true Christian, as to sentiment and conduct, implies a disapprobation of the thoughtless and worldly, and is a visible testimony borne against it. It is viewed and felt by

the world as a condemnation of their opinions, spirit, and manners : and hence they are displeased and dissatisfied. Instead of examining who are right, and who are wrong, they suffer their passions and prejudices to be excited. The views of true Christians do not please them—much less does their conduct please them. If, indeed, the followers of Christ would join them in their pleasures and amusements, they might hold their opinions without incurring much severity of animadversion. But the world cannot endure, that a mark of contempt should be put by any persons on their favourite delights and pursuits. Whatever has a tendency to dissipate the illusion of their self-complacency; what would lead them to question and examine themselves; what would make them hesitate as to the propriety of their own proceedings; what would conduct them to the unwelcome discovery of the emptiness of their objects, and of the consequent perverseness of their choice ;—every thing of this sort produces within them a strong feeling of aversion towards those who are the cause of their uneasiness. Be conformed to the world, and you will have the world's love : come out of the world, and be separate, and you will have more or less of the world's hatred. Walk in their sinuous path, and enjoy their esteem : walk in the path of rectitude, and incur their contempt.

True Christians love all men, and deserve the love of all men : but they must be contented to live without it. The world cannot love them : for there is no moral likeness, no identity of thought

and feeling, between the self-complacent men of the world and the self-renouncing disciples of Christ: nay, there is a complete contrariety between them. We may address true Christians in the language of Saint John: 'Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.'—Passions lead to effects: and the effect of hatred is,

2. Persecution. 'If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you: if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.' Our Lord was persecuted, his words were disregarded, and He taught his disciples to expect a participation of like treatment. The Acts of the Apostles inform us how his declaration was verified.

Persecution is the word that fitly describes the ill treatment which the Church of Christ has experienced at the hands of her enemies, in various nations and in different ages. Thousands, yea myriads, of the followers of Christ have been called to prove their faithfulness to Him by undergoing the most bitter tortures, and even death itself in its most appalling forms. We look with grief on the sanguinary spirit of their adversaries: and we admire the grace of God which supported his servants in their severest trials. We have, however, no wish to see the word 'persecution' lowered in its meaning, to describe the comparatively slight opposition to which serious persons may be now exposed for righteousness' sake. The days of persecution and fiery trial, it is true, may return; for the elements of it always exist in human nature: and we have no doubt, that in the walks of private

life many persons endure what, without exaggeration, amounts to real persecution. 'I am come,' said our Lord, 'to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.' It is not the design of the gospel to produce such discord : but such is its effect, through the evil principles and passions of our corrupt nature. It is not wise in serious Christians to magnify their troubles. The opposition which they may have to encounter will show them what dwells in the heart of man. Unpleasant epithets are used : Calumny circulates her tales : Suspicion whispers her surmises : the gay laugh : the more calm and sedate affect to pity : the proud despise the children of delusion : and the violent utter their bitter sarcasms and invectives. In some cases the society of the pious is avoided, as if it were contagious ; and in others, their temporal prospects are materially affected. The enmity of the carnal heart is shown in various ways : and though we may hesitate to say that, properly speaking, the good are persecuted, yet undeniably they have the world's dislike.

We caution all Christians, and especially the young, against rashness and imprudence. Let them be faithful to their principles : and they greatly mistake, if they think that they can be truly pious, and yet accommodate themselves to the world. 'Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God ? Whosoever therefore will be the friend of the world, is the enemy of God.'

Remember these plain and weighty declarations, not in order to censure men, or to complain of your lot, but in order that you may be prepared for all occurrences, and think, and feel, and act with wisdom, patience, charity, and propriety. But,

III. We consider the Encouragements which our Lord has suggested for the support and comfort of his faithful followers.

1. Real Christians, in experiencing the dislike and opposition of the world, only share the lot of their divine Master while He was upon earth. 'If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.' 'Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord.'—If in our trials we attend to the first emotions of our hearts, we may account them heavy and severe, and use very improper language: but if we look to our blessed Lord, we shall find that He walked in a far more thorny path than ours is: and if He endured troubles for us, shall we indulge in mournful complaint, if we endure troubles for his sake? Surely, the moment we think of Him and of his example, every gloomy thought and painful feeling will be removed, and the voice of murmur will be hushed in silence: nay more, our souls will be filled with peace, and our language will be praise. Hoping to enjoy conformity to Him in his glory, we cannot account it hard to be conformed to Him here in some measure in his sufferings. If He had enjoyed on earth grandeur, luxury, and ease; if He had been caressed and applauded; we might have had some pretext for regarding suf-

fering and trial a hard portion : but no one can venture to repine, when he recollects that our Fore-runner in the path to glory was our Forerunner also in the path of tribulation. Again,

2. The real Christian in being disliked and opposed by the world, has a proof that he is not of the world. The love, friendship, and admiration of men are, in many respects, agreeable : but if we have them they prove that we are of the world ; for ‘ the world would love his own.’ What, however, has our Lord said ? ‘ Woe unto you when all men speak well of you.’ If we incur the dislike of the world merely by our consistent adherence to the gospel, it furnishes a proof that we are separated from the world, that our lot is with the righteous, and that, if we persevere unto the end, our final inheritance will be with them. The love and favour of God, and the testimony of our own consciences, will amply compensate for the loss of the world’s regard.

In proportion as we improperly comply with the world, in order to avoid its scorn, or to secure its friendship, we are unjust to the Gospel, to the Church of Christ, to the world, and to ourselves. We lessen our influence, perplex the good, and render the truth of our piety doubtful. With no other feelings than those of the deepest sorrow, is the compromising Christian ever to be regarded. He has his reward—the delusive and perishing sunshine of human favour.

If, then, it be the peculiarity of the true Christian, that he is not of the world, it is only by order-

ing his conversation as one who is not of the world, that he can have a clear proof of his being a true follower of Christ. In proportion as he comfortably mingles with the world, he has reason to question the efficiency and even the reality of his piety. If, on the other hand, our religious views and principles separate us from the world, we have one proof of their efficiency : and whatever we may experience from the perverseness of men, we cannot fail to enjoy peace and satisfaction in our own souls : for he who has in himself a strong evidence of being a true Christian cannot be unhappy.

3. The dislike and opposition of the world proceed from ignorance. 'But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.'—Voluntary ignorance does not lessen guilt : it is in itself a sin. Men in general refuse to seek the knowledge of religion, and, in the midst of surrounding light, walk in darkness. This is their sin and folly. But since they are in such a state, a proper recollection of it may make us patient, silent, and submissive, when we experience their perverseness. We have been visited by divine mercy, while they remain in sin and condemnation. They do not know God ; and they do not know what they are doing in opposing the gospel and its true adherents. We may, therefore, well return their hatred with love, their reproaches with kind expressions, and their improper conduct with all benevolent services : for the mercy which has pardoned us may pardon them, and the grace which has subdued us may subdue them : and if

they should be made partakers of the power of the gospel, they would confess and lament their former cruelty and injustice, and rejoice to unite themselves to that brotherhood which they once despised. Their present conduct is easily explained : they are objects for pity, not for anger : and we act wrongly if we do not endure their perverseness with patience and tranquillity. Let us think of our opposers as our Lord thought of his murderers while He was upon the cross : and let our spirit, as his was, be that of reflection, meekness, and prayer : thus shall 'patience have her perfect work' in our case, as it had in his.

We conclude the discourse with a few practical remarks.

1. The world ought to lay aside their aversion and opposition to the pious. You admit, in moments of reflection, that religion is the best cause : and, therefore, you must admit, that its real disciples choose the good part, and are the best characters. But if any one attend faithfully to religion, it frequently happens that he loses your esteem, and incurs your dislike. Here, however, is a manifest violation of common sense ; an acting against your own reason and conscience. But we will not insist on this. We exhort you to seek the knowledge of God in the gospel of his Son : and this being obtained, you will discover the perverseness of your present spirit and conduct, and will 'choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.' If you continue in ignorance, and persist in your own

course, you may annoy the good in various ways : but remember the end of all things : ‘ the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.’ O think of that day of separation, when ye shall ‘ discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.’ ‘ Be wise now therefore, be instructed : serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.’

2. Real Christians ought to be true and faithful in their sacred cause. Never deserve, never provoke hatred and opposition : but do not shrink from them through cowardice, interest, or any wrong motive. Mistakes and improprieties proceeding from zeal, are far more pardonable than such as originate in a cold and compromising spirit. The former bespeak affection, honesty, and courage : the latter are indications of a frame of mind utterly unworthy of a disciple of Christ. But why rush into any extremes ? Hold fast the pure doctrines of the gospel : let its spirit pervade your souls, and its rules regulate your conduct. Neither conceal your light, nor be blazing meteors ; but be as the stars that always travel regularly in their paths, and shine with the same splendour. The gospel is sufficiently offensive to the world, without being made more so by the misconduct of its friends : and our trials in the way of duty are sufficiently numerous, without our making them more so by our own imprudence. Remember the words of our Lord to his disciples : ‘ Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves : be therefore

wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.' Be faithful, open, affectionate, and decided ; but be also wise, calm, considerate, and discreet.

3. True Christians ought to persevere in their course, and to maintain their separation from the world to the end of life. In the lapse of years we are but too apt to lose much of the vividness of early impressions, with not a little of that honesty and decision which marked our earlier days. How often do we see the fervent Christian degenerate into a lukewarm professor,—animated and decided only when he is defending some favourite tenet! There is, indeed, a softening and a mellowing influence in time, which harmonises the moral features, and gives an enchanting beauty to the picture. But what we caution you against is, that approximation to the world which shows that your own spirit is in a measure become secular, and that the energy of pious principles and affections is impaired. Continually, therefore, hold communion with God, and seek fresh supplies of grace, that, weak and sinful and in an evil world, you may persevere in the way of truth, holiness, and righteousness ; decided, but not rash ; kind, but not compromising ; deserving the world's love, but not disturbed by the world's hatred ;—approving yourselves to God, to your own consciences, and to all wise men.

SERMON XIX.

The Ways of God, and the Guilt of Unbelievers.

ST. JOHN, xv. 22, 23, 24, 25.

If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin : but now they have no cloke for their sin. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin : but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

WHATEVER be our notions respecting the divine government, God 'will be justified when he speaks, and be clear when he judges.' Revelation gives us sufficient assurance, by all its discoveries, that He is holy and just in all his ways. With regard to ourselves, it gives us that information of our state and character which is in full agreement with fact and observation, and with the testimony and feelings of our own consciences. But does the state of moral disorder in which we are, furnish us with any plea or excuse for living in sin? Are we to sink in despair, or to wait for some sensible and invincible power to effect our deliverance? Certainly not. We see our condition as depraved

creatures : but we also see the gracious conduct of God towards us. We have means of obtaining the divine favour, of being restored to holiness, of living in obedience to the divine will, and of being blessed for ever. We cannot remain in sin and ignorance, and bring ruin upon ourselves, without wilfully disregarding divine mercy and love, reason and conscience. If we persist in folly, we are without excuse—we are self-condemned. The ways of God may be incomprehensible to us ; but it is evident, both from his word and conduct, that He would have all men come to the knowledge of the truth, and that their destruction, if they be finally lost, does not proceed from Him, but from their own perverseness. He has provided salvation for man, and revealed it to him ; and He invites him to accept it. We know that we ought to search the Scriptures, to attend thoughtfully on divine ordinances, and to pray without ceasing. We can do these things, if we will : and if we neglect to do them, we know and feel that we act wrongly and ruinously.—With the text before us, we may consider the Ways of God, and the Guilt of men.

I. We consider the ways of God. ‘If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin.’ ‘If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin.’ Thus our Lord speaks respecting the Jews. It was foretold that He should ‘suddenly come to his temple ;’ and He did come :—that He should proclaim ‘the acceptable year of the Lord ;’ and He ‘preached good tidings unto the meek’—sublime

and consolatory doctrines and holy precepts. St. Peter thus appealed to the Jews respecting his miracles; 'Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.' If our Lord had not thus come, and taught, and performed undeniable miracles, the Jews would have been comparatively guiltless. But He proved himself to be the Messiah: what He said and did afforded abundant evidence that He was 'He that should come,' the Consolation of Israel, a Light also to lighten the Gentiles. The Jews, however, did not act as rational beings, but allowed themselves to be governed by their prejudices: and thus they involved themselves in the deepest guilt. We see, then, what were the ways of God to them. 'What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it?'

But the advent, doctrines, and miracles of Jesus were intended for the benefit of all nations and ages. What God did to the Jews, He has done to us: He has sent us salvation: and that which was the duty of the Jew, is also our duty,—to examine it, and to receive it. We do not see the Redeemer in person, or hear Him speak, or witness his miracles: but we have the inspired record, and we are bound to examine its evidence and its doctrines: and it is at our peril that we refuse to hear 'Him that speaketh from heaven.' Such are the ways of God to us: and two things here demand our notice.

1. We here see the Goodness of God. He has conferred upon us many and inestimable blessings. We are surrounded with the light of revelation. We have the Scriptures, the Lord's day, public ordinances, and in short, all those means of instruction, both in public and private, which are needful for our becoming wise in the things that belong to our peace. What plea or excuse, then, can we offer for not attending to our salvation? None whatever: and yet many among us seem to have no serious thought about the divine goodness, or about man's duty. Men are most perversely ingenious in fabricating apologies for their misconduct: but their devices are vain. We know the way to life and blessedness. We are not groping in the darkness of paganism, or attending the shadowy ordinances of Judaism. We are encompassed with the true light, and are taught to behold Him and to receive Him who is the Saviour, predicted by prophecies and by types. If, then, we continue in carelessness and unbelief, how great is our guilt!

Nor is this all: for the Gospel is put before us in such a manner, with such evidence of its truth, and with such a development of mercy, grace, and love, that we can have no just plea for neglecting it—much less for rejecting it. If, therefore, we treat it improperly, we have 'no cloke for our sin;' nothing to palliate our wickedness and ingratitude. We readily condemn the Jews for their obstinacy and unbelief:—and on what ground do we condemn them? On this,—that the gospel was an-

nounced to them in such a manner as made its divine origin undeniable. If they had properly examined the Old Testament and the doctrines and miracles of our Lord, they must have seen, (you are ready to say,) the injustice of their incredulity, and have become the faithful disciples of Jesus. And what is our own case? Of the evidences of Christianity we can here only observe, that they are such as render the gospel worthy of all acceptation. Let the prophecies and miracles of Scripture be studied; let the propagation of the gospel be examined; let its doctrines, spirit, and precepts be explored; let the character of Jesus be rightly contemplated; let the universal and exact adaptation of evangelical discovery to the nature and state of man be carefully scrutinised; let the moral character which the gospel forms when it is properly received, be impartially viewed;—and we shall have a full conviction that it is the wisdom from above. It invites and challenges our most rigid scrutiny: and all properly conducted inquiry only strengthens our persuasion that it is from God.—In this we see the divine goodness. God deals with us, not as machines, but as moral beings; who are not under a law of necessity, but who are to be wrought on by rational motives or inducements. Reject or neglect the divine truth we may: but then we are inexcusable; we have ‘no cloke for our sins.’ Some, indeed, seem to think that they live for the gratification of themselves; and others murmur and repine because their enjoyments are so few and scanty. But the

goodness of God is unquestionable : He has poured his benefits upon us : and many are the blessings and talents intrusted to our care, and which we are to occupy, so as to be able to give an account of ourselves to our Judge in the last day without confusion and shame. It is true that God dispenses his gifts as He pleases. He disposes of his creatures according to his own will. Our place and rank, our wealth and our endowments, are according to his all-wise regulation. But let us distinctly observe, that, of whatever we may be destitute, the mere bearing of the Christian name is a circumstance to be regarded by us as an inestimable blessing, while that name is at the same time a talent connected with the most serious responsibility. It may be justly maintained, that Christians, simply as such, are possessed of many talents. Men may have their excuses and apologies for living carelessly and thoughtlessly : but though these may close the lips of the sorrowing minister of Christ, and perpetuate the deathly slumber of the soul, yet they have no real validity. ‘God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.’ This may be accounted the great proof of God’s goodness to us—the great blessing which we enjoy—the universal blessing. Whatever be our rank, and place, and endowments ; whether we be high or low, learned or unlearned ; we are reasonable and accountable creatures ; God’s gracious purposes towards us in Christ Jesus are revealed to us ; and we are called

to repentance and faith, to holiness and obedience, to grace and glory : and in all this we see an ample manifestation of the divine goodness. But,

2. We see here the Equity of God. As He does not make requirements where He does not confer talents, so where He confers them He will make requirements. His ways are equal. With regard to the Jews, if our blessed Lord had not come, and taught, and done 'miracles and wonders and signs' in proof of his mission, He declares that they 'had not had sin : ' they would not have incurred the guilt which they did incur by withholding conviction after such evidence. In like manner, if He had not given us the gospel, not only with its glorious and gracious discoveries, but also with that proof which it was proper for moral agents to have, He would not impute to us the sin of disregarding it. He deals with us as a kind Master and righteous Governor. He confers upon us what He sees to be proper, and requires only the faithful improvement of what he has committed to our trust. The slothful servant is represented as attempting to vindicate his indolence; St. Matt. xxv. 24 ; but his vindication was as false as it was profane, and served only to increase his guilt. We rest in the conclusion, that while God requires only the due improvement of what He bestows upon us, He does require such improvement of that. Every Christian, therefore, is bound to act as a steward of the manifold bounty of his Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Benefactor. In this we see righteousness and equity.

II. We now consider the Guilt of mankind.—If we live in ignorance and sin, we cannot justify our conduct: for the light of truth is abundant; the evidence of the truth is satisfactory; the path of duty is clear; and reason and conscience assert the necessity of our subjection to revelation. The Jews rejected Christ and the gospel: and do not great numbers of Christians involve themselves in similar guilt? Our ‘hardness of heart, and contempt of God’s word and commandment,’ are clear proofs of the evil and perverse state in which we are as to spiritual matters. Our Lord describes it in awful terms. ‘He that hateth me, hateth my Father also.’ ‘But now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.’ The blessed Jesus came to his own nation; and, ‘his own received him not.’ ‘They hated Him without a cause.’ He taught and acted in such a manner, that He could say, ‘They have seen me and my Father.’ But his doctrine was disregarded, and his miracles ascribed to demoniacal agency. In our text we see the cause of their blindness and perverseness. Here the heart is unveiled: they hated Christ, without any real cause of hatred: and their hatred of Him was also the hatred of the Father. If we hate Christ, we also hate God. The guilt, therefore, of careless Christians is not confined to the mere fact of disregarding the gospel, but it also springs from their wilfully cherishing a frame of heart directly opposed to God and real goodness. The charge, then, that we fasten on those who disregard their salvation is twofold.

In the first place, they refuse to receive Christ and his gospel. The goodness and equity of God, and their own responsibility, are forgotten; and they live without any serious thought about spiritual things. Some, indeed, openly assert, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.' But the greater number of Christians settle down in neglect, indifference, and apathy. They may account religion to be in itself a good thing: but they cannot attend to it: and thus, using various empty pretexts, they make light of it. How many neglect to attend the public ordinances of religion, and make the Lord's day a season of idleness and vanity! How many of those who are not so heedless, are cold, or lukewarm, or formal, and entirely disregard the nature, spirit, and design of the gospel! They have no thought of becoming the spiritual disciples of Christ: and in the habitual frame of their mind, they are opposed to Him and his word. But can it be a slight offence for men to follow their own devices, and to close their eyes and hearts against the light and power of revealed truth? Certainly not. Indifference to religion, which amounts to a rejection of it, may be justly called the common transgression of Christians. Hear our Lord's words: 'And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.' There are some among us who go to a certain extent in religion; but they will on no account pass beyond the boundary which they have prescribed for themselves. Their religious

profession, therefore, produces no complete renunciation of their own opinions, no direct opposition to their worldly desires, no sincere relinquishment of vain amusements : nay, it is perfectly compatible with a frame of mind and heart, and with a line of conduct, which are widely remote from the requirements of the gospel : and thus is Christ, as to all saving benefit, rejected by these.

In the second place, Christians in general cherish and maintain a frame of heart which is in itself exceedingly sinful. The love of Christ may be called one of the peculiar principles of the gospel. To love God out of Christ, to whatever extent it may be carried, and then to think that we truly love God, is to mistake that delight which is produced by the contemplation of infinite excellence, and of which we are naturally capable, for the love of God in Christ, or the true scriptural principle, of which we are not naturally capable. The great question for us to propose to ourselves as Christians is, Do we love Christ ? If we do not love Him, we, in the scriptural sense of the expression, ‘hate’ Him : and if we hate Him, we ‘hate the Father also.’ Where the love of Christ is not, the love of God is not : and if love does not exist in the heart, hatred exists in it : and while we cherish our fond fancies and pleasing hopes, we are in the estimation of the Searcher of hearts haters of Christ and of God. The words of our Lord justify this view of the subject. ‘Now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.’

You presume that you love God : and yet at the

same time you are indifferent to the gospel, and put it far from you. Your light is not the light of the gospel, and your love is not that which the gospel produces. But your removal of the gospel from you is a proof that you do not love Him, for it is only by the reception of the gospel that He can be loved, since only in the gospel is He revealed to us as the God of our salvation. But if you do not love God you hate Him: that is, there is in your hearts a latent enmity, a feeling of aversion, that keeps you from Him. The fact is, you are lovers of the world, of pleasure, of vanity, and not of God: and if you live and die in this state, you will finally be condemned as haters of Him and of his Christ. There is no third characters. Truth or error occupy the mind; love or hatred occupy the heart: and when we say that those who disregard the gospel, are the enemies of God and of Christ, we say, strong or even harsh as our declaration may seem, what is undeniably true.

We trace aversion to the divine truth to 'the carnal mind which is enmity against God.' But this evil state of the heart is no excuse for any part of our misconduct: for the sinful frame of soul in which any of us may be living, is a proof that we do not seek the illuminating and renewing influence from above. The guilt, therefore, which is incurred by the careless treatment of God's word, and by the perverse state of heart which leads to that treatment, is entirely our own. And who can tell how great is the guilt of men in cherishing an evil

state of heart, and in turning away from the words of eternal life!

We would here, for a few moments, expostulate with careless Christians. Is there, we ask you, any thing in the blessed Jesus,—in his spirit and conduct, in his doctrines, laws, and service,—that justifies you in refusing to submit to Him; to receive Him as your Saviour, to hear Him as your Prophet, and to obey him as your King?—If you hate Him, you hate Him ‘without a cause;’ for He is glorious in Himself, entitled to your veneration and love. He is also merciful and gracious: He has brought in everlasting righteousness; become ‘the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him;’ and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.—If you hate Him, you hate Him ‘without a cause:’ for He is a kind Master, whose ‘yoke is easy and’ whose ‘burden is light;’ whose ‘commandments are not grievous;’ and who requires no service of you but what conduces to your present, as well as to your future, happiness.—If you hate Him, you hate Him ‘without a cause;’ for He is a ready and compassionate Helper, comforting his people in their distresses, and imparting to them light, and grace, and strength, that they may walk in the steps of his most holy life. He is their Shepherd to lead and protect them: and under his guidance they want no manner of thing that is good.—If you hate Him, it is ‘without a cause:’ for He is a bountiful Rewarder, who, when this brief pilgrimage is ended,

will receive his faithful people to himself, to behold his glory, and to rejoice before Him in the fruition of perfect and unending blessedness.—You may hate Him: but your own reason and conscience tell you that you ought to love Him. You may, however, cleave to your error, folly, and delusion through the whole of life, and even in death itself. You may proceed in impenitence and unbelief; you may speak peace to your souls; and you may laugh at those who would wish to disturb your spiritual repose: but what will you do when you come to the disclosures of the future world, to an unveiled eternity? Then you will learn that God is not deceived, and will not be mocked. You may despise Jesus now, and treat his gospel as if it were a fable: but what will you do in that day when He whom you deny at present, denies you before his Father which is in heaven? O lay these things to heart. ‘Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.’

You condemn the Jews for rejecting the promised Messiah: and in what respect are you better than they, or is your guilt less than theirs? You have greater privileges than they had, and are free from the peculiar prejudices in which they had been educated. But you mould the gospel according to your own opinions; reduce religion to mere formal observances; and forget the light, life, energy, and blessings which are essential to your

spiritual welfare. You shut the heart against Christ, and will not receive Him to dwell and reign there. You do not speculatively renounce Revelation; but you practically disregard it; so that your light is another light, that is, your light is darkness; your life is another life, that is, it is death; and your service is another service, that is, it is disobedience and rebellion. Meditate, we beseech you, on the goodness and equity of God: meditate on your past carelessness, impenitence, and unbelief: meditate on your own obligations and responsibility, and on the great day of account: and no longer abuse the divine patience and forbearance; no longer proceed in a course of thinking and acting which will end in shame, confusion, and everlasting ruin.

But we conclude the discourse. And here we exhort you to consider what your circumstances are. In the goodness of God, you possess the volume of Revelation: the words and the works of the Lord Jesus Christ are plainly set before you. And what, in such circumstances, is your duty? Surely it is, to receive the divine light, and to walk as the children of the light. Search the Scriptures; pray without ceasing; faithfully improve the public ministration of the word and sacraments: never think that you are true Christians while you are living unmindful of your souls and eternity. Use all your means of grace; always looking to, and praying for, and depending upon the Holy Spirit. Thus you will become the true

disciples of Christ; those who love Him and also the Father; those who rejoice in the light, life, mercy, power, service, and prospects of the gospel.

You may look to many around you, and plead their conduct in justification of your own. This is a common, but a delusive and fatal measure. Christians in general are careless about their salvation, and live as if there was no other world but this: and are such persons examples for your imitation, or is their perverseness an excuse for yours? Rather let their misconduct be a warning to you: lament it in them, and keep far from it. What do you learn, as you look to them and their conversation in the world? You may learn, that it is easy to abuse our blessings, so that they are no blessings to us. We may have the Bible, and not read it; hear sermons, and forget them: enjoy sabbaths, and waste them; have a throne of grace, and not kneel before it; or kneel before it formally, and therefore with no advantage: in a word, we may have all Christian privileges, and be very far from being real Christians. And will you thus trifle with sacred things; thus abuse the divine goodness; and thus aggravate your condemnation and misery? Tremble to act a part so contrary to the religion you profess; to every dictate of calm reason; to every whisper and feeling of your own conscience.

Let those who, by divine grace, have received the truth in the love of it; who have heard the words and considered the works of Jesus; who love the Father and the Son; who have tasted

that the Lord is gracious ; let such be unfeignedly thankful for the divine goodness to them. But conscious of manifold imperfection, let them diligently press forward, if we may speak so, into the more interior parts of the kingdom of grace. Why should they be always dwellers upon the skirts and confines of it ? Look unto Jesus ; hear his words ; pray for his Spirit : and your knowledge will become more clear and extensive ; the love of Christ and of the Father will abound and prevail in your hearts ; and the efficacy of faith and love will be seen by all men in your blameless, holy, and heavenly conversation. Proceed in this manner ; and you will live as those who know and improve the divine goodness ; as those who are properly impressed with a sense of their accountableness to God for all his gifts and blessings ; and as those who shall stand before the Judge of all men in the last day with gladness, approbation, and honour.

SERMON XX.

*Encouragement, Duty, and Trials of the Disciples
of Christ.*

ST. JOHN, XV. 26, 27. and xvi. 1—4.

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning. These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.

OUR blessed Lord came to his own nation, the Jews; taught the most gracious doctrines, and performed many and incontrovertible miracles; but nevertheless He was despised and rejected of men. The evidence of his Messiahship was clear; and thus the Jews were without excuse. Their conduct proceeded from an evil state of mind and heart;

which state, as well as its result, was itself exceedingly culpable, and aggravated their guilt. If the disciples had confined their attention to the perverse conduct of their countrymen, and then looked forward to their own prospects, when they were to be deprived of the personal presence of their Head, they might have been plunged into the deepest sorrow, and sunk into abject despondency. But did the honour and success of Christ and the Gospel depend upon the Jews? Could their hatred and calumny stain his glory, or their unbelief injure his Cause? When the disciples were left a lonely band in the midst of opposers and persecutors, were the doctrines of Jesus to be forgotten by them, or to be only the themes of their solitary musings? Had they entered upon a singular career, and were they to abandon it before they had even understood its nature, character, and design? No. Our Lord communicated painful intelligence, but it was counterbalanced by that which was consolatory and animating. He speaks again of the divine Personage who would bear an effectual testimony to Him and vindicate the truth. He assures them, that they also should be his witnesses, adding, in agreement with what He had previously stated, that, although their support would be ample and their employment honourable, their trials would be great and severe. What He advances may be viewed as a prophecy; and as such it was fully accomplished: but its immediate design was to comfort the hearts and to confirm the faith of the disciples.

I. We reflect on the Mission of the Holy Spirit.

‘But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.’—Thus our Lord speaks of the Paraclete : and we ought to form, in the light of Scripture, as correct views as possible of his person, character, and work. Confining our attention to this verse, we see that three divine persons are distinctly mentioned ; the Comforter who is sent, Christ who sends Him, and the Father from whom He is sent and from whom He proceeds. If we form our notions of Deity from this verse, we cannot exclude the idea of plurality. While we maintain that there is but one true God, we are compelled to admit that there is something peculiar in the mode of his subsistence. On the humility with which we ought to think, and on the modesty with which we ought to express ourselves, on this subject, it would be needless to expatiate : but such obvious rules cannot be too carefully remembered and acted upon. ‘Vain men would be wise : they would fain go to the very bottom of things, when, alas ! they scarce understand the very surface of them. They will allow no mysteries in religion ; and yet every thing is a mystery to them. There is not a spire of grass but is a mystery to them. They will bear with nothing in religion which they cannot comprehend ; and yet there is scarce any thing in the world which they can comprehend.’ [*Bp. Stillingfleet.*] But human presumption will neither remedy human weakness, nor change the nature of things : and let men either boast or cavil, creation and revela-

tion will always abound with mystery, and teach us the dimness of our vision and the incomprehensibility of God.

Two things respecting the Comforter demand our consideration ; his Personality, and his Deity. With regard to the former, He is uniformly spoken of in the Scriptures, both as to Himself and as to his operations, as a distinct person, or a real Agent. Scriptural language will not allow us to view Him in any other light. Consider what took place at our Lord's baptism ; what our Lord spoke of blasphemy against Him ; our Lord's injunction, ' Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost : ' and it must be concluded that He is a person. But if we only observe what is said in the chapters which we are examining, we are led to the same conclusion : for He is represented as a Comforter, as one Sent, as a Teacher, as a Reprover, as a Glorifier of Christ, and as one who abides with the Church. He is, therefore, a real Agent, or language has no definite meaning whatever.—And with regard to his Deity, we assert it on the ground of his procession from the Father, of his operations, and of the manner in which He is spoken of in connexion with the Father and the Son. Understanding here by ' procession ' the natural and essential relation of the Spirit to the Father, we would view it as a mystery which, since it cannot be explained by man, we profoundly venerate, and which, in the silence of Scripture, we are unwilling to obscure, not to say corrupt, by any

thing that we could advance. We only maintain, therefore, that the Holy Spirit is an Agent to whom the attributes and operations of Deity belong. To search the deep things of God, to dwell simultaneously in the hearts of myriads of human beings in all countries, and through all ages; to enlighten, subdue, convert, purify, comfort, establish, guide, and protect immortal souls in an evil world; is the work of one who is infinite, omniscient, omnipotent, and eternal; of one who is God. We omit the gift of tongues, the miracles wrought by the Apostles, the propagation and establishment of the gospel in the world, and other matters: but let them be impartially considered, and they furnish strong arguments for the truth which we are asserting.—As to the manner in which the Holy Spirit is mentioned in connexion with the Father and the Son, less cannot be said than this, that it furnishes the strongest proof of his Deity. If He were not God, how could an Apostle pray in these words? ‘The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.’ Here is personality, and here is Deity: for on any other supposition, the language is either absurd or profane. The place that He occupies, and the offices which He sustains, in the economy of redemption, being united in it with the Father and the Son, revealing and rendering effectual the counsels of the one, and the redeeming work of the other, is sufficient to satisfy the humble and teachable mind, that real Personality and Deity belong to Him: and it is

with the strictest propriety that our Church teaches us to pray in these words ; ‘ O God the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners.’

Such in few words, (for we only glance at the subject), is the glorious Person of whom our Lord speaks : and let us always meditate with adoring awe, but also with gratitude and joy, on the Jehovah of Scripture—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, uniting and acting in perfect concert for the salvation of a perishing world.

II. We proceed to consider the Testimony of the Holy Spirit to Christ. ‘ He shall testify of me.’


1. Let us notice the testimony of the Spirit to Christ in the first age of the Church. Whatever He did for the diffusion and establishment of the gospel, was bearing witness to the person and claims of our Lord ; was proving that He was the true Messiah, the Saviour of men. The day of Pentecost was the first great day of his bearing testimony to Christ. He then testified of Him by those indisputable proofs which declared the innocence of Him whom the Jews had condemned, but whom the Father justified. He showed the truth of our Lord’s promises, and the certainty of his exaltation to the right hand of God : and this He did, by the wonderful change that He wrought in the Apostles themselves ; by the conversion of so many of their hearers ; by the gift of tongues ; and by enabling the Apostles to perform various miracles. In short, He endowed them with knowledge, and with every qualification for their work, so that

the enemies of the truth were covered with confusion, and many were brought in all nations to the obedience of faith. They triumphed by his might over the combined influences of power, prejudice, error, and corruption. The Holy Spirit thus bore unequivocal testimony to Jesus as the Son of God, 'the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.'

2. We further observe the testimony of the Holy Spirit to Christ to the end of time. The words of our Lord contain a general declaration ; one not limited to a certain period, or to a few individuals ; but one that asserts the peculiar office of the Comforter through all ages. The Spirit of truth undoubtedly adapts his measures, or modes of testimony, to the circumstances or exigencies of mankind. The first teachers of the gospel were furnished by Him with extraordinary gifts : but when these were withdrawn, did the work of the Spirit cease ? Certainly not : his office is perpetual : his abiding presence and agency are essential to the existence of the Church in the world ; and its enlargement, edification, and prosperity entirely depend upon them.—But we will fix on one point—his illuminating influence, his testifying of Christ : for this is one great branch of his ordinary operations, of which true believers as such are partakers : that is, it is by the participation of this that any persons are true believers. Suppose any individual to be living in a thoughtless and careless manner. He is impenitent, unbelieving, self-sufficient, and worldly. But he becomes thoughtful ; he halts in his course, and refuses to proceed in it ; he repents,

believes, and renounces the world ; he remembers his Creator and Redeemer, and seriously regards his soul and eternity. Who is the author of this change ? The Holy Spirit. What discovery has this person made ? The discovery that he himself is a lost sinner, and that Christ is the only Saviour. As to this latter point, the Spirit of truth has testified to him, and is continually testifying to him, of Christ. He knows the blessed Jesus, in the light of Scripture, and in the experience of his own soul, as the Mediator between God and man. We will suppose that he prospers in religion : and how shall we describe this prosperity better than by saying, that he ‘ grows in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ? ’ This statement describes substantially the work of the Holy Spirit as to this matter. All true believers know Christ : they have those views and apprehensions of Him and of his redeeming work of which the dead and slumbering world are entirely destitute : and these, we maintain, are the immediate result of divine illumination. This is the testimony of the Holy Spirit to Christ through all ages ;—a testimony to the soul, known and experienced by all those who believe with the heart unto righteousness.

III. We notice the Testimony of the Disciples. ‘ And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning ; ’ that is, from the beginning of my ministry ; the hearers of my doctrine, the eye-witnesses of my miracles, and intimately conversant with me.



1. In what manner did the disciples become the witnesses of Christ ? Two of them, Saint Matthew and Saint John, under the guidance of that Spirit who brought all things to their remembrance, and who preserved them from error, committed to writing that portion of his discourses, and such parables, miracles, and other transactions, as the wisdom of God saw fit to be recorded for the instruction of the Church. In their beautiful and unaffected narrative they have made us, to speak so, intimately acquainted with our Lord ; hearers of his gracious words, and spectators of his miracles and conduct ;—of his life and death, and of his glorious resurrection and ascension. But all the disciples gave their testimony to Him, by preaching the gospel with great boldness, fervour, and constancy ; by the miracles which they wrought in his name ; by their holy lives, which proved the efficacy of their doctrines upon themselves ; by the undeniable effects of their labours,—the lives of the Christian converts evincing the truth and holiness of Christianity ; and by their death, (for most of them suffered martyrdom,)—thus giving the strongest proof of their own convictions, and also showing the power of the gospel, which was able to support them under the severest trials. They acted according to the commission which our Lord gave them before his ascension to glory. The spheres of their labours, in the case of many of them, cannot be accurately determined : but we know that by their ministry many nations were made acquainted with salvation through our cruci-

fied Redeemer. We have sufficient evidence to prove, that they were witnesses of Him ; declaring to Jews and Gentiles, to Greeks and Barbarians, to bond and free, that Christ was exalted to be ‘ a Prince and a Saviour,’ and that ‘ there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.’ But,

2. Let this assertion of our Lord, ‘ And ye also shall bear witness,’ not fail to remind every Christian what his duty is. It is the peculiar office of the Minister as such to testify to all men ‘ Repentance toward God, and Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.’ He is an ‘ ambassador for Christ’ for this very purpose : and for this he has a commission and authority peculiarly his own : and thus he is an official public witness of the Truth. At the same time, private Christians, even in the smallest and lowest circles, are witnesses of Christ ; not officially, but by their holy conversation, and confessing Him before men. In their families, and in their circle of relatives and friends, they will show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into marvellous light, and made them acquainted with the mercy, grace, and power, with the consolations, hopes, and prospects of the gospel. In a word, by their excellent spirit and conduct, their works of faith and labours of love, they will bear a substantial testimony to the fact, that the gospel is the wisdom of God and the power of God ; that the Christian faith is a living principle, so that the trust placed in Christ is placed in one who redeems, purifies, and blesses his people with

all spiritual blessings. In this manner all Christians ought to bear witness to the Son of God.—We consider now,


IV. The persecutions and trials which awaited the disciples. ‘They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, when whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things they will do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.’—The disciples, in the exercise of their ministry, were to be exposed to excommunication, and even to the loss of life. The conduct of their persecutors originated in criminal ignorance. It is in the dark and benighted breast that those evil passions prevail which urge men to the direful deeds of injustice and inhumanity. Sober reflection, and all the tender sympathies of relationship, are forgotten amid the violence of the passions, and the most horrid outrages are greedily perpetrated. The history of the Church furnishes us with melancholy proofs of the truth of this remark. But if we calmly consider the origin of a persecuting spirit, we may well pity those who are actuated by it, and learn also the necessity of diffusing in the world the light of true religion: and if we be called to suffer for the sake of truth, let us not allow our spirits to be exasperated; but let us rather remember Him who prayed amid the most bitter sufferings, ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.’

The history of the disciples verified the predictions of our Lord. The gospel was a stumbling-block to the Jew, and foolishness to the Greek:

and its advocates were accounted the offscouring of all things, and treated as such. They drank of their Master's cup : they were baptized with his baptism. And let us magnify the grace of Christ, which enabled them and the primitive Christians, as it has also enabled many since, both in this nation and in others, to be faithful unto death.

But shall we account it strange if we experience more or less, in our faithful profession of the gospel, the hatred and cruelty of the world ? It can be scarcely possible for us to confess Christ before men as we ought, without learning that the human heart is opposed to real piety. Let us, however, remember the language of an Apostle : ' If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye ; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.' ' If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed ; but let him glorify God on this behalf.'—We observe, lastly,

V. The object which our Lord had in view in declaring these things to his disciples. ' These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.' ' But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.'—The painful information which He now communicated to his disciples, would have been useless to them, and might have been injurious, at a former period : but as the time was drawing nigh when, as to visible presence, He was to be removed from them, He made an explicit disclosure of their fu-



ture troubles. He did this, in order that they might not be offended,—might not fall away from the truth, but remain steadfast in their adherence to it. By his prediction their minds would be prepared for all events. They would not be able to say in their trials, that any thing had befallen them which they had not reason to expect. And when they recollected, in those trials, the declarations of their divine Master, the fulfilment of his words would strengthen their faith in Him, and act as a strong motive to endure their sufferings with patience and resignation. He who had proved his Omniscience by the revelation of the future, could not fail, if they confided in Him, to uphold them by his power, and to comfort them in all troubles and perplexities. He who had been true in his predictions, would be faithful to his promises.

And such too is the effect which our Lord's predictions ought to have on us. The perfect agreement between the discoveries of the Bible in general, and of our Lord's words in particular, with the spirit and conduct of men at all times, forms one clear proof of the divine origin of our holy religion: and this furnishes us with a strong reason for being steadfast in it at all times. The gospel is holy: the human heart is corrupt: and when, therefore, they are brought into contact, there will be a strife, a dislike, an aversion in the heart, which is at one time shown by raillery and sarcasm, and at another time by opposition and persecution. But why should we be offended? All has been foretold us: and the storms that we meet with in our heaven-

ward way, ought, instead of enfeebling, to strengthen our attachment to the gospel.

The honesty of the Bible, to use such a phrase, deserves our notice. The Bible describes things as they are, and will be. As to the case before us, our Lord does not allure men into his service by deceitful promises. He knew the opposition which his doctrines and his followers would encounter in an evil world ; and He describes the path to glory as a path of tribulation. The light, joy, peace, and comfort of the believer are from above : but let him not expect any thing from the world to assist him in his righteous course, but rather much to obstruct his progress. If we form our views of religion from the Bible, we shall discover its beauty and sublimity, and see it to be the source of pure, abundant, and abiding happiness : but at the same time we shall reject all fanciful expectations, fully convinced that the true and consistent profession of it cannot be maintained without trials, difficulties, and much to occasion sorrow. While the Bible plainly reveals to us what lies before us while on earth, we may rejoice in this,—that it teaches us how to act and to endure, shows us our resources, and opens to our view that happy world where opposition, trial, and sorrow will be unknown.

Thus, in the mission and work of the Comforter, we see our Encouragement ; in witnessing of Christ, we see our Duty ; and in the opposition and hostility of the world, we see a part of our Trials.—In conclusion,

1. Let us contemplate with lively gratitude the

mission of the Holy Spirit, and receive Him as He who 'proceedeth from the Father.' To Him we are indebted for the volume of revelation, and also for that mighty influence by which it becomes to us the word of eternal life. Mere speculations about Him, about his Personality, Deity, and Operations will not profit us : for that which is essential to our salvation is, that He testify to us of Christ ; that He enlighten our minds and purify our hearts. ' No man can say' to his salvation, ' that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.' If we would be saved, we must be partakers of the Holy Spirit, for by Him only can the good work of true religion be wrought in our souls. Let us bless God for this great gift, seek the personal possession of it, and beware of abusing it.

2. Let us duly consider that it becomes all of us, in our several places, to be witnesses of Christ in an evil world. Let us bewail our past neglect and unfaithfulness, and henceforward attend with the utmost vigilance to the cultivation of the Christian temper, in which so much of true piety consists, and to the maintenance of Christian conduct. By an upright conversation, by kind, amiable, and holy dispositions, by family prayer, by serious conversation, by promoting all good purposes according to our ability ;—in all these ways you may bear witness to Christ in your generation. We greatly fail with regard to this line of conduct : but let us lay the subject to heart, and seek grace for the proper discharge of our duty.

3. Let us not form any fanciful views of a reli-

gious life; and let us not be impatient under any trials. Our blessed Lord walked in the path of suffering, not only as a Redeemer, but as an Example. 'Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.' Conformity to Him is the highest object that we can propose to ourselves. And how can we forget, that conformity to Him in glory above, is to be preceded by conformity to Him in holiness, obedience, and patient suffering on earth? As true believers, we shall partake various measures of joy, peace, and consolation; but we shall have our several measures of sorrow and trial. But it is the happiness of Christ's true followers to 'glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.' 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.' Let us then 'run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.'

SERMON XXI.

The Operations of the Holy Spirit.

ST. JOHN, xvi. 5—11.

But now I go my way to him that sent me : and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou ? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth ; It is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment : Of sin, because they believe not in me ; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more ; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

OUR blessed Lord had already spoken of the Comforter, and that repeatedly : and He speaks again of Him in these verses in a very striking manner. His expressions are deeply interesting, since they specify, in emphatical language, what the operations of the promised Paraclete are in the world. There is, we admit, no small difficulty in interpreting these verses, so as to form a positive idea of the precise meaning of every assertion which is advanced in them. We do not enter in these discourses into any of the perplexities of criticism :


and therefore we only observe, that the words 'reprove,' 'the world,' 'sin, righteousness, and judgment,' in the eighth verse, are in their own nature so far ambiguous that they have a very extensive meaning: but, as we apprehend, their meaning here is in a considerable measure limited, since they must be so explained as to agree with what our Lord advances in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh verses.

We see in the text that our Lord attentively observed the conduct and spirit of his disciples: He saw their grief, and felt an affectionate concern for them. 'But now,' said He, 'I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your hearts.' He then proceeded to comfort them, by giving them a more explicit discovery of the office and work of the Holy Spirit. He asserts the expediency of his own departure, and then describes the operations of the Comforter with immediate reference to three important subjects, or, more correctly speaking, to three branches of one important subject.

I. Our Lord asserts the expediency of his own departure from the disciples. 'Nevertheless I tell you the truth, It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.'—There was a manifest order in the work of redemption. The law prepared the way for Christ; and Christ prepared the way for the

Spirit. He laid the foundation of his Church by his life, death, resurrection, and ascension, and by the doctrines which He preached. He fulfilled the types and prophecies; made the one availing sacrifice; and became our Mediator and Intercessor. But the fabric of the Church was to be raised, during revolving ages, upon this foundation by the agency of the Holy Spirit. Until the great outline of divine truth had been given by our Lord as the Prophet of the Church, and the atoning sacrifice made by Him as our High Priest, and He had ascended to the mediatorial throne, the Holy Spirit was not to enter on the full execution of his peculiar offices in the redeeming economy. Our Lord, by virtue of his mediation and intercession, 'received gifts for men,' and especially the gift of the Holy Spirit. His personal presence was, doubtless, pleasing to the disciples, who heard his words with delight, and saw his miracles with wonder and joy. But they were walking in the morning twilight, not in noon-day splendour; they were yet children in knowledge, and not men. Our Lord might have removed from their minds the errors and imperfection of their views: but there was an order observed in the development of truth. Christ had his peculiar province in the dispensation of redeeming love; and He confined himself within its limits. He was to 'publish the glad tidings of great joy,' 'the acceptable year of the Lord,' and so to do the will of his Father, by obedience and suffering, as to be the meritorious cause of man's salvation. But the Holy Spirit had also his peculiar province

in that economy : for He was to act as the efficient cause in bringing men to God in Christ, and in fitting them for the enjoyment of eternal happiness by his renewing power. It belonged to Him to vindicate the character and cause of Christ ; to demonstrate that He was the predicted Deliverer of mankind ; and to bring home to the souls of men the truths of the gospel and the blessings of redemption. The Lord Jesus Christ made reconciliation for iniquity, and ascended to glory, to appear ‘in the presence of God for us ;’ and the Holy Spirit was sent forth, as the fruit and proof of the finished work of the Redeemer, to enlighten the dark mind, to purify the corrupt heart, to liberate the captive soul, and to enable it, in the exercise of faith and love, to rejoice in the favour of God and in the hope of glory. And here we see the truth of our Lord’s declaration with regard to his departure ;—an event which was expedient to the disciples and to all mankind. * As to the disciples themselves, they were to be brought by the promised Comforter to a clear, full, and effectual knowledge of the gospel, and to be qualified for the performance of those arduous duties which they had been selected to fulfil. The visible presence of Christ implied the absence of the Holy Spirit. ‘If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.’ In this case their piety would have remained imperfect, and they would not have been the heralds of salvation to mankind. ‘But if I depart,’ our Lord added, ‘I will send him unto you.’ He departed and sent Him ; and their piety



as individual believers, and their success as the heralds of the truth, were immediately conspicuous and undeniable.


We admire the wisdom and goodness of our Lord. When He had finished the work which his Father had given him to do on earth : He neither regarded himself nor the gratification of his friends, but proceeded to do what was expedient and profitable ; what conduced most to the glory of God and the good of mankind. He had begun his work in love and compassion ; He had proceeded in it with unwearied diligence ; and we now behold Him advancing to the last great act of obedience with unruffled composure and unbending determination. What tenderness and fortitude did He display ! Let us remember Him ; and let us learn not to consult our gratification, but to perform our duty ; not to regard what is pleasing, but what is expedient ; not to be insensible or fearful, but to exhibit the tenderness of affection and the calm energy of courage. But,

II. Our Lord describes the work of the Holy Spirit.—We propose to consider the primary meaning of his assertions, with regard to the Jews ; and then their secondary and universal meaning with regard to mankind in general.

1. We consider the primary meaning of our Lord's assertions. 'He will reprove the world.' The Holy Spirit will, by his operations, so teach and convince the perverse Jews, that they will see and confess their former error and wickedness. He, in the execution of his office, will make them,

that is, considerable numbers of them, clearly and demonstratively acquainted with sin, righteousness, and judgment.

‘He will reprove the world of sin :’ ‘of sin, because they believe not in me.’ Sin, generally understood, is transgression of the law of God : but the expression, ‘because they believe not in me,’ seems to limit its meaning here to unbelief. Our Lord’s words, if this be correct, may be thus paraphrased : ‘The Holy Spirit will convince men that they have been guilty of a gross offence in refusing to believe in me, in rejecting me, and in putting me to death.’ Now if the Holy Spirit gave such testimony of Christ, as proved that He rose from the dead, ascended to glory, and was therefore the Son of God, their guilt in rejecting Him would be fully proved. But this is what the Holy Spirit did, whether we look to the events on the day of Pentecost, or to the miracles wrought by the Apostles in the name of Christ, or to their subsequent labours. He proved by them, as his instruments, that Jesus was the Messiah : and thus it was manifest, that the Jews had added to their sins the sin of unbelief. That He did thus reprove the Jews of sin will be evident, if we recall to mind the effect of Peter’s address to them. ‘Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do ?’ These men saw and felt, that they had been guilty of a great sin in not believing in Christ as the true Messiah. In this point of view, our Lord’s declaration has



had only a partial fulfilment ; but that was real, decided, and manifest : and then we conclude from the language of prophecy, (Zech. xii. 9, 10, 11.) that it will yet receive a more extensive fulfilment in that future day when the Jews shall be brought into the Christian fold.

‘He will reprove the world of righteousness,’ ‘of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more.’ The humble appearance and the death of Christ were opposed to the views and expectations of the Jews, who calculated on his never leaving the world. They, therefore, regarded Christ as a deceiver, and condemned Him and his cause as unrighteous. But if it were proved, that He rose from the dead, ascended to glory, and fulfilled his promises, the righteousness, that is, the truth and reality of his claims and cause, would be indisputably evinced. But the Holy Spirit proved those matters ;—proved that He was with the Father, ‘exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour.’ Those who had refused to believe in Him would be convinced, unless they resisted the Holy Spirit, that our Lord was no deceiver—that his cause was righteous. The majority of the Jewish nation, intrenched within the stronghold of prejudice, resisted the testimony, and continued in unbelief : but the text was fulfilled in the case of many, and is yet to have a more extensive accomplishment.

‘He will reprove the world of judgment ;’ ‘of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.’ By the latter expression we understand,

that Satan is vanquished and condemned, his throne convulsed and his sceptre broken, so that he is no longer a dominant and unrivalled power. Not only the heathens, but also the Jews themselves, viewed as a people, were, before the advent of Christ, in a great measure the subjects of Satan's kingdom. But the success of the gospel, by which many were brought, through the Holy Spirit, to light, and life, and liberty; to the cultivation and practice of holiness and obedience; proved, to reflecting persons, that the dominion of Satan was broken, that a stronger than he had invaded his territories, that he was judged, or condemned; and that the power of Christ, by his word and Spirit, would prevail in spite of all opposition. It proved that authority and judgment were committed to Christ, and were triumphantly exercised by Him.

If, then, we examine the sacred history, we find that in one day about three thousand souls were added to the Church. There existed, therefore, a body of people among the Jews who had complete proof, not in the form of a mental speculation, but of a strong moral conviction, of their former sin of unbelief; of the righteousness of Jesus, or of the truth of his character and claims; and of his victory and power over the prince of darkness, and every thing opposed to Himself and his gospel. In their case the words of our Lord were literally fulfilled. Nor is the truth of his words at all affected, as we have said already, by the fact most of the Jews resisted the Holy Spirit, as they had before rejected Christ. We unite the past recorded

operations of the Spirit and his future predicted operations; and we are fully satisfied as to the truth of our Lord's assertions to his disciples.—We now proceed,

2. To consider the secondary and universal meaning of this part of the text. In this view we regard it as designed by our Lord, to describe the operations of the Holy Spirit with respect to mankind at large. Supposing the preceding explanation to be correct, the prosecution of the subject is not difficult. The principal terms must in each case have the same meaning: and the operations of the Holy Spirit must be substantially the same, on whatever persons He may act—leading through much the same process to the same result; to faith in Christ, with all its inward influence and external fruits.

1. Where the Holy Spirit acts with enlightening and convincing power, He causes the soul to see and feel the evil of unbelief; the sinfulness of living without Christ—of practically rejecting Him. It is, indeed, only by the Holy Spirit, that, in the common sense of the expression, we are convinced of sin, or made experimentally acquainted with the corruption of our nature and the transgressions of our lives. But the sin of unbelief is that which is here expressly mentioned. Before we are made partakers of divine influence, we are Christians by baptism and profession: but is it not a fact too obvious to escape our notice, that the greater part of Christians, notwithstanding their privileges, are spiritually and practically without Christ? He is

not glorious in their view ; He is not enthroned in their hearts ; He is not the sole foundation of their hopes. They read and hear about Him ; but they do not truly know Him. They have some notions respecting Him ; but those notions are inefficient. Their faith, or what they account faith, is a dead faith. In this state they are living in pride, self-sufficiency, prejudice, impenitence, and unbelief. They are full of vain thoughts and ungrounded hopes. Such, we fear, is the description of thousands among us. But when the Holy Spirit acts in a prevailing manner on the souls of these persons, He not only makes them feel that they are miserable sinners, but that, in particular, they have been guilty of disregarding Christ, and of living without true faith in Him. They find that they have been spending their days in error, folly, and vanity ; that they have been building upon the sand, ungratefully refusing the mercy and grace of God in Christ Jesus. They now find, that men may account themselves believers, and be accounted such by others, and yet be without faith, in a state of death and condemnation.

Such, we apprehend, is one of the strong convictions produced by the Holy Spirit in an enlightened and awakened soul. It is, indeed, reproof universally of sin, but especially of the sin of unbelief. It sees and feels that it has been acting a most unworthy, unreasonable, and ungrateful part, as well as ruinous, in disregarding Christ, and the salvation which is in Him. This statement may appear singular to those who are walking in the

vanity of their minds, and who cannot conceive how men can profess Christ and yet not be his real disciples. We can only say, that they will understand the subject when they are led by the Holy Spirit to a deep anxiety about their eternal welfare. Each of them will say, 'Hitherto I have been living without a saving knowledge and apprehension of the Son of God. I have been a stranger to Him—to his redeeming mercy and grace.' This is one of the convictions wrought in the soul by the energy of the divine Reprover. Here is one great branch of his operations, preparatory to something further. For,

2. The Holy Spirit causes the soul, convinced of unbelief, to see the Righteousness of Christ; that is, as we understand the passage, to acknowledge that Christ is the true and only Saviour. An awakened Christian searches the Scriptures; reads, hears, prays, and meditates; and what is the result? He is fully satisfied that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, the promised Deliverer, the Redeemer of mankind. He sees that his redeeming work is real and complete; that his mediation and intercession are effectual; that He is the light and life of all who receive Him; and that hope built upon Him is built upon a rock that cannot be shaken.

Impostors and deceivers have been in the world, and have beguiled many. But righteousness, that is, truth and reality, belongs to Christ. His claims were of the highest order. He asserted that He and his Father are one; and that all things are delivered unto Him of the Father; and that no man

cometh unto the Father but by Him; and that whosoever believeth in Him hath everlasting life. Are his claims just—his assertions true? The humble believer, under the effectual influence of the Spirit, is fully persuaded that they are just and true. Prophecies fulfilled, types accomplished, miracles wrought, God revealed to man, man revealed to himself, futurity unveiled, the moral universe explained—all bear witness to the righteousness or truth of Christ. The eye of man does not behold Him: but the evidence that He is with the Father is complete—is overpowering. Proofs of his righteousness, free from every thing that can in the least degree invalidate them, press on the attention of the inquiring Christian from every quarter. The Holy Spirit thus leads the soul to acknowledge Christ as our ascended and glorified Lord, who is himself the truth and whose word is the truth. It is one part of his operation to bring man to a proper view and conviction with regard to unbelief; so that he becomes an humble penitent: and it is another part of his operation to bring man to a proper view and conviction respecting Christ; so that he justifies and exalts Him, and looks to Him, and rejoices in Him as the only and the sure hope of man. But, further,

3. The Holy Spirit leads the soul, when convinced of unbelief and of righteousness, to see that the cause of Satan, of sin and error, is a condemned cause; that Christ is an almighty and triumphant Saviour; that He has established a kingdom of truth and holiness in the world; and that his is

the glorious cause to which all men ought to be faithfully attached. He patiently submitted to the false judgment of men; but in doing this, He fulfilled the great object of his incarnation, and became the conqueror of Satan, of Death, and of the Grave. After the descent of the Holy Spirit, the preaching of the gospel was successful among polished and barbarous nations; and multitudes were brought from darkness to light; from the degrading slavery of Satan into the blessed liberty of the children of God; and these formed the subjects of a new spiritual empire, living under the sceptre of the Prince of peace.

But while the true Christian sees an ample proof of the power of Christ in the existence and history of the Church, he has a clear proof of it also in his own experience. The kingdom of Christ is in the heart of the real believer, established there upon the ruins of the dominion of an expelled usurper. He feels in himself the workings of a victorious agency, which has enlightened his darkness, subdued his pride, softened his obdurate heart, inspired his soul with love and gratitude, detached it from the world, and fixed it upon God as its supreme object. As he sees the power of Christ, and the judgment or condemnation of Satan, demonstrated in the world by the establishment of the Christian Church, so he feels the demonstration of the same facts in himself, by his conversion from the ways of sin to those of righteousness, and by his edification in piety among the resisting influences of a corrupt nature and of an evil world.

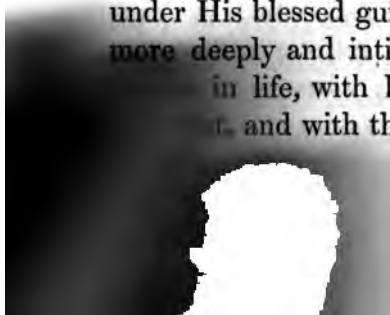
And this strong conviction is, among other things, a powerful argument and motive for his condemning sin in himself, warring and watching against it, keeping aloof from it, and diligently attending to all that inward and outward excellence which form the substance, beauty, and glory of Christ's kingdom.

Such is the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul of man; begun when the prodigal comes to himself, and perpetuated through the whole of the believer's pilgrimage on earth. The natural man, it is true, is a stranger to these things: and he will be so, as long as he remains to be a natural man. But we appeal to those who have spiritual discernment in divine things. What the Holy Spirit did as a Sanctifier in the first ages of the Church, He does through all ages: and thus there is a substantial agreement between the first and last the convert to the faith of Christ. Is it, then, not true, that from the Holy Spirit the careless man of the world is brought to see and feel the evil of unbelief, the reality of salvation in and through Christ, and the condemned, hateful, and ruinous character of sin? Are not these the great matters with which the spiritual man is deeply acquainted, and with which he becomes more familiar as he advances prosperously in piety? While we are destitute of the divine influence, we know nothing of the gospel effectually. We may describe it, by the exercise of our imagination, as a splendid field, where the light of truth shines in rich effulgence, where the waters of salvation flow in unfailing streams, and

where the tree of life invites us to eat of its fruit, and to repose beneath its spreading arms. But we may delineate blessings of which we are not partakers. To talk of unbelief, of Christ, and of the condemnation of sin as the evil and fatal cause, is no hard task : but it is only by the influence from above, that we renounce unbelief, that we glory in Christ, and that we abhor that which is evil. Religion without that influence is, in fact, as to us a distant matter,—a matter of speculation : but by that influence it becomes a home-concern,—the subject of our experience. If we converse with spiritually-minded Christians, we shall find that they have discovered their own unbelief ; that they have found Christ to be their Saviour, and that they honour Him as such ; and that they look upon the dark empire of evil as that from which they have been graciously rescued : that is, we shall discover that the text, according to the view which we have taken of it, has been fulfilled in them. But we may add, this work of the Holy Spirit is to be regarded as a continued work : for every prosperous believer becomes, as he goes onward in his righteous course, more and more convinced of the evil of unbelief, of the truth and glory of Christ, and of the hateful nature of sin.

In concluding the discourse, we only observe, that there is one truth, or one fact, which we cannot too frequently repeat, or too earnestly press upon your attention : it is simply this,—The influences of the Holy Spirit are essential to true or saving piety, both as to its commencement, and

as to its continuance. If we are living without these, we are living, whoever we are, and whatever we may know and profess, without Christ, without God; and therefore we are in our sins. The saving work of religion in man's soul is not made up of notions and professions: it is a work of reproof, of conviction respecting unbelief, the Saviour, and the great cause of good and evil;—of reproof and conviction not resulting from man's wisdom and ability, but from a divine power;—not producing notion, debate, and profession, but true self-renunciation, a living faith, and holiness of heart and life. We, therefore, beseech every one of you to question himself!—‘Have these words of Christ been fulfilled in me? Has the Holy Spirit reproved me of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment? Have I seen and felt the sin and danger of living without Christ? Have I so discovered the truth and reality of his character as to build all my hopes of pardon, righteousness, and heaven on Him only? Have I renounced the Devil and all his works, and am I living in all dutiful allegiance to Him who is King upon the holy hill of Zion?’ Thus, we say, question yourselves, and pray for the Holy Spirit, that He may give you a right understanding of these things, and a real and full experience in them. And happy is that believer who, under His blessed guidance and influence, becomes more deeply and intimately acquainted, as he advances in life, with his own heart, with the glory of God, and with the holiness of his kingdom.



SERMON XXII.

The Holy Spirit a Teacher of Truth and a Glorifier of Christ.

ST. JOHN, xvi. 12, 13, 14, 15.

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth : for he shall not speak of himself ; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak : and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me : for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine : therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.

THE information which our blessed Lord had given to his disciples respecting the operations of the Holy Spirit, was in the highest degree important and valuable. It showed what the Comforter was to effect. The statement may be variously understood : but while, in a general view, it relates to the vindication of Christ and the establishment of his kingdom in the world, it may relate, in a secondary sense, to the very same matters with regard to the soul of the individual. The rejection of Christ is, in the case of communities or of separate persons, the ruinous offence : that Christ is

the true Messiah, is a matter of great moment to all and to each : and that sin, whether viewed in the king of darkness or in its agency on human beings, is a condemned cause, and is to be abhorred as such, is a point concerning which our apprehensions cannot be too clear, or our convictions too strong :—and we have seen how the Holy Spirit produces in men an effectual knowledge of these things. We have here, therefore, a distinctly marked outline of spiritual agency in its leading branches : and here too we can form an idea of spiritual piety, and of our own state and character respecting it : for what the Holy Spirit has done in a way of demonstration in our world, He also does in a way of demonstration in the believing soul.

Our Lord proceeds to advance some other truths connected with this subject. The principal ideas which He wished to impress upon the minds of his disciples were, that the Comforter would be a Teacher whose instructions would agree with those which they had already received, but would be more clear and extensive ; and that his illumination and renovating influence would especially accomplish one object,—the glorification of Christ as the Messiah.

I. We are to consider the office of the Holy Spirit as a Teacher.—Our Lord consulted the capacities of his followers in the instructions which He gave them. ‘I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.’ The gospel contains many things, or doctrines : and if we suppose that we understand it fully, because we

receive some of its doctrines, we are greatly mistaken. The past, the present, and the future, the old and the new Testaments, God and ourselves, this world and the next,—furnish us with an immense variety of wonderful subjects for our study. Religion has its springs, rivulets, and shallow streams; but it has also its boundless and unfathomable oceans. It has beauty that is charming to every eye; and it has glory that dazzles the vision of archangels.

The ‘many things’ to which our Lord here referred, may have been the abolition of the ceremonial law, the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles into the Church. The disciples were not yet prepared to receive such intelligence; and before they could bear it, it was requisite that their minds should be more enlightened in the nature and design of the gospel. Our Lord, therefore, only intimated here, that subjects remained to be revealed at a future period, and that his silence respecting them at present proceeded from his knowledge of their incapacity to receive them.

We are here taught, then, that our development of divine truth should be proportional to the capacities and attainments of those whom we instruct. Ministers may account themselves faithful when they unfold all doctrines according to their own conceptions of them, without any regard to the mental and moral state of their hearers. But in doing this, do they imitate their divine Master? There are many forms in the school of Christ: and the instructions adapted to the case of some Chris-

tians may not be at all adapted to that of others. To teach high doctrines to those who ought to be learning elements, cannot be viewed as either wise or profitable.

Further, if a Christian know many things in religion, let him be thankful ; but let him not fail to remember, that there are many things in it of which he is ignorant, and therefore be unfeignedly humble. The feeblest Christian should recollect, that there is such a thing as advancement in knowledge, when piety is prosperously cultivated : and the most mature Christian should recollect, that he only knows divine truth partially and imperfectly ; while also there are many things which he cannot bear in the present state of existence. Let us be thankful that we know something ; diligent, that we may know more ; and humble, because we know so little.—But we are to consider the office of the Holy Spirit as a Teacher.

1. He teaches Christians all needful truth. ‘Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.’ Thus our Lord taught his disciples, that He himself had only made a partial discovery of truth to them, and that the Spirit would carry on and perfect what He had begun. The whole counsel of God was not prematurely unfolded by our Lord : the completion of the work begun by Him was to devolve on the Paraclete.


The whole truth is in our possession ; that is, the volume of inspiration is complete : but we should recollect, that we need an almighty agency

to operate on our minds, that we may rightly apprehend and receive the truth. If the mere mental reception of it were all that is necessary, we might be competent to that by our natural powers: but it is the necessity of spiritual illumination and spiritual reception that renders divine agency indispensable. In vain does the light of the sun fall upon a diseased eye: and equally in vain is the light of divine truth poured upon a disordered mind. Our mind is naturally in such a state, not so much when it is intellectually, as when it is morally considered, that by our own unaided powers we cannot arrive at a spiritual understanding of the doctrines of revelation. We need a restoring might; and with it they are light, and life, and salvation both to savage and to sage. In proportion as any one is partaker of the spiritual illumination, and of the restoring energy from above, he obtains an efficient apprehension of all truth; that is, of all the truth needful to salvation.

As to the fulfilment of this promise in the case of the disciples, we only refer you to the Acts of the Apostles, and to the several Epistles. Of the latter our notions are incorrect or inadequate, unless we view them as the completion of divine Discovery; as the expansion and elucidation of the Gospels, by the eternal Spirit of truth and grace. In the Acts and Epistles we see how the first preachers of the gospel were enabled to understand, by divine teaching, to unfold, and to transmit to the Church, the whole counsel of God.—
But further,


2. The discoveries of the Holy Spirit were to be in full accordance with what our Lord had taught. 'He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak.' Our Lord here speaks of the Holy Spirit as of a Legate, who ought to say nothing but what he has been instructed by his principal to say. The Bible contains one gracious scheme of truth. It is composed of various parts, which form a harmonious whole, without contradiction and inconsistency. Our Lord taught what He had received: thus He speaks: 'And the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.' In like manner, the instructions given by the Holy Spirit would not be from himself, or of his own will, but agreeably to the injunctions and will of the Father. He taught what He was commissioned to teach. We, therefore, find the most perfect harmony between his instructions and those of our Lord: they were only the development and ramification of the principles and facts which our Lord had promulged in a more compendious manner.

In whatever way, and at whatever time, divine truth has been communicated to men, that truth has been the same. Whether we look to the patriarchs, to Moses, to the prophets, to the Gospels, or to the Epistles, we find precisely the same doctrines at every step of our progress. And this identity of truth, which pervades the sacred volume, affords one strong argument of its divine origin.— But we have here a rule by which we may judge of the nature of divine teaching. We have the words



of Christ in the Gospels, and the words of the Spirit in the Epistles: that is, we have the mind of Christ, the mind of the Spirit: that is, we have the mind of God unfolded to us by an infallible Teacher. We speak of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of discovery: but He discovers no new thing, no new doctrine: but, acting upon us in a manner that comports with our nature and circumstances, He enables us to understand and receive the truths deposited in the Bible. Hence we reject, as not coming from God and from his Spirit, every thing that is contrary to the written word; that is not explicitly revealed in it, or undeniably deducible from it. But,

3. The Holy Spirit was to reveal to the disciples things then future. 'And he shall show you things to come.' This declaration is to be confined to the disciples, and to a few others of the Apostolic age. The Holy Spirit was to be in them a Spirit of prophecy or prediction: and various instances of this fact are recorded in the Acts and in the Epistles, and more especially in the book of Revelation, which concludes the inspired canon with a series of prophecies which extend to the end of time—to the consummation of all things. The great work of the Spirit on the disciples was to make them rightly acquainted with the gospel: but He accomplished also a further object; for as by the prophecies of the Old Testament He prepared men for the first Advent of Christ, so by prophecies of the New Testament He teaches men to look forward to his second Advent, and to prepare for it. We may



remark, that the history of the world in general, and of the Church of Christ in particular, has been, is, and will be, as ages revolve, the development of those things which the Holy Spirit has revealed to us by the disciples.

II. We now consider the Holy Spirit as the Glorifier of Christ. ‘He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and show it unto you.’—The Spirit glorifies Christ by making his glory or perfection known and acknowledged. By descending on the disciples on the day of Pentecost, by giving success to their preaching of the gospel, by enabling them to work miracles, by supporting them in their trials, and by keeping them steadfast and faithful unto death, He unfolded before men the glory of the great Redeemer.—And what are we to understand by our Lord’s words, ‘He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you?’ By the things of Christ, we may understand the mind, counsel, will, or doctrines of Christ, which are the same as those of the Father. The Holy Spirit knew the mind of Christ, the unsearchable riches of wisdom which are in Him; and it was his office to reveal these things to the disciples,—to give them, by a peculiar agency, a clear, extensive, and spiritual view and apprehension of the glorious and gracious scheme of redeeming love and mercy.—We view, then, the lives, the miracles, and the preaching of the disciples, and we see how the Holy Spirit glorified Christ: He made them

acquainted with his glory, and enabled them to set forth his glory before men. Through the operations of the Spirit the adorable Emmanuel was exhibited to Jew and Gentile, through the preaching of the Apostles, in all the glory of his person, as the Son of God, the Word made flesh, the Redeemer of a ruined world : and this was done with the fulness of divine knowledge, the force of resistless argument, and the victorious energies of conviction.

This declaration of our Lord, ‘All things that the Father hath are mine,’ gives us a most exalted view of the blessings of his kingdom. All glory, all perfection, all truth, love, mercy, and grace, are in the Father as the Fountain of Deity : but they are in Christ also as the Mediator : and they are so given to the Holy Spirit that they are revealed and communicated to our souls by Him. Here we see the economy of redemption. The cause of Christ is the cause of God : when, therefore, the Spirit glorifies Christ, He glorifies God. The more we are spiritually acquainted with the gospel, the more are we acquainted with Him who is Perfection.

Those emphatical words of our Lord, ‘He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you,’ are frequently repeated by many Christians : and, provided they are rightly understood, they cannot be too constantly kept in view. The great work of the Holy Spirit, in the case of every penitent and believing sinner, is to glorify Christ ;—to make Christ glorious in the view of that individual : and

this He does by discovering the things of Christ, his doctrines, and Himself the substance of them, to the soul, so that it sees his glory and the glory of his redeeming work, and makes its boast in Him. The operation is not fanciful, but real ; not visible, but spiritual ; not according to crude notions of ours, but according to the sublime agency of the great Enlightener of souls. The mind that once knew in fact nothing of Christ, now sees and acknowledges his glory. ‘ But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.’ Happy are they who through the illuminating and renewing Spirit are daily becoming more acquainted with Christ and his word !

Here we see what true Christian piety is. It is not a few vague notions, a few splendid fancies, a few light feelings about the Redeemer : but it is the Redeemer known, trusted in, accounted precious and glorious ;—and all this increasing in the soul with the lapse of time, according to the agency from above, our serious and devout study of the Scriptures, and diligent use of all Christian ordinances. Seeing in Christ the Only Begotten of the Father, the Mediator, the Intercessor, the Advocate, the only foundation of hope and spring of happiness, the believer glorifies Him in heart and conduct ; and his language is, ‘ Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.’

Here we have a great article of spiritual religion—one that is comprehensive of all others; for all others are only the consequences of it. As the work of the Holy Spirit in the case of the disciples was to glorify Christ—was to make them acquainted with his glory, and to enable them to publish his glory in all the world,—so is his work substantially the same through all ages. He makes Christ and his gospel known to immortal souls in an effectual manner. Darkness is scattered from the mind, pride is subdued, lofty imaginations are laid low, and in faith, love, hope, humility, and joy, the disenthralled spirit lives in the cultivation of holiness and obedience, and looks forward to the glory that shall be revealed.

Some Christians speak with apparent satisfaction of God, of his attributes and providence; and some display here the acuteness of the sage, and others the fancy of the bard. Some will speak with fluency about the beauty of virtue and the excellence of morality, and censure vice as the degradation of man. But ask them to discuss some topic of the Christian faith: ask them to speak of the manifestation of Christ to the soul in the light of Scripture and by a divine agency: and will they not be found glad to turn away from a subject of which they have no knowledge, and for which they have no taste? And is not, we would ask, an indisposition of heart to the deep, sacred, and essential matters of spiritual piety a melancholy circumstance wherever it is discovered? The state of the soul with regard to Christ is that which determines the

character of any Christian. If the spiritual state of any one be truly what it should be, the thoughts and affections will be much engaged upon Christ in the ordinary course of life : ‘ Him first, Him last, Him midst, Him without end.’ Christ is the centre of our redeemed world : and where shall the eye look, and to what shall the sanctified spirit gravitate, but to the Sun of righteousness, who is the light and life, the strength and joy of our souls ? The more we find our minds engaged with thoughts of Christ and his redemption, the clearer is the evidence that we are partakers of the true illuminating influence from above.

Our Lord uses here a very remarkable expression : ‘ All things that the Father hath are mine ; therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and show it unto you.’ This is a clear and strong assertion of his own dignity, ‘ denoting that there is the most intimate connection and perfect community of counsel, will, feeling, energy, and operation between the Father and the Son ;’ and therefore, wherever the Holy Spirit enlightens the mind, and glorifies Christ, his discoveries will correspond with this assertion. The expression, ‘ all things that the Father hath are mine,’ is universal : but if we understand by ‘ all things’ only counsels and doctrines, who but the Son of God, who ‘ was with God, and was God,’ could say that the counsels of God were his counsels ? His words imply an equality between the Father and himself. It leads us at once to the conclusion, that the revelation which would be made by the Spirit, was to be a

revelation of that truth which belonged equally to the Father and to the Son. Such a union exists between them, that when the Spirit reveals the things or doctrines, the glory and mind, of Christ, He reveals those of the Father. Their essential union is such that the glory of the one is the glory of the other; the mind of the one is the mind of the other: there can be no diversity of glory, will, or purpose in them.

Thus our Lord communicated here to his disciples some of the high truths of his kingdom, and led them to form the most elevated views of Himself as one with the Father: and thus we are instructed how to regard his person. The incomprehensibility of the doctrine does not form, in the estimation of the wise and humble, the slightest objection to it: for where, or on what, can we look, and not find what is incomprehensible? The doctrine meets us on the very surface of the sacred page: and however perverse ingenuity may wrest the language of Scripture, the glory of the Redeemer will shine there, even the attempered radiance of essential Deity, with undiminished radiance, from age to age, the light, the consolation, and the joy of all meek and believing souls. And our conclusion is, that wherever the Holy Spirit enlightens the mind, there the most elevated views of Christ will be entertained. How can any of us bring ourselves to conceive, that the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to glorify Christ, can be the Teacher of those who hold the most degraded views of his person? He is revealed to us as ‘ the

brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person : ' and surely the illuminating influence of the Spirit will lead us to view Him in accordance with such a revelation. If Christ be not glorious in our view, and if we do not ascribe all glory to Him as one with the Father, what evidence can we have that we are partakers of the Holy Spirit ?

We offer, in concluding the discourse, a few practical observations.

1. Ministers will do well to remember in the communication of religious truth the conduct of our Lord towards his disciples. What we mean to say is, that the whole counsel of God is to be faithfully declared, but a due regard is to be had to the character, temper, and capacity of hearers. The Christian minister has nothing to conceal : but, consulting the good of his flock, he will endeavour to give to every description of persons of which it is composed those instructions which, under God's blessing, are most like to promote their benefit. As to himself, he may delight to expatiate on those high truths with which the inspired volume abounds : but in his ministration of the words of eternal life, he will endeavour to feed children with children's food, as well as to give strong meat to the adult and mature believer.

2. Hearers ought not to be offended with those truths which at present they may not understand. Are you perplexed by what you hear, and ready to ask, ' How can these things be ? ' Beware of yielding to any prejudice : for as to the instructions

which you cannot now receive, or which you dislike, you may at a future season find them plain and invaluable. Go forward with humility, diligence, and prayer; and in due time you will be able to receive, or at least to understand, every truth that is put before you. The statements of a Minister cannot be confined to one class of hearers: and as mature Christians ought not to be displeased with the most common and familiar truths, so Christians of inferior attainments ought not to be displeased with truths of the highest order, into which they cannot yet enter.

3. The Holy Spirit is to be always regarded as the Spirit of truth. The counsel, mind, or word of God, and therefore that of the Son, is truth: so likewise is that of the Holy Spirit, since He only reveals what He receives—the mind of God and of Christ. Hence the gospel addresses us with supreme authority, as the word of God. But the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth also as the enlightener of man's mind in the truth: and hence there is the greatest necessity of seeking and depending upon his influence. In vain do we admit that the Bible is the volume of truth, unless we study it as such: and in vain do we own that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, unless we seek and rely upon his illuminating power. No further is any one truly pious, than as he is a partaker of the Spirit; and no further does any one prosper in piety, becoming more wise, more believing, more holy and obedient, than as he is taught and led by the Spirit. How, then, can we possibly look too

much to Him who is the Teacher of our minds as well as the Renewer of our hearts!

4. It should be remembered as one great point in religion, that a saving knowledge of Christ can be obtained only by divine illumination in the use of our means of grace. Such a knowledge of Him is the sum and substance of true piety; for where He is thus known, there will be all the principles and affections of spiritual godliness, and all the virtues and duties of practical godliness. We ought, therefore, not only to pray generally for the sanctifying influence of the Spirit, but also particularly for his enlightening agency, by which we grow in the knowledge of Christ, and glorify Him, as He who is 'far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.'

5. It is of the greatest importance, that we entertain the most elevated thoughts of the Lord Jesus Christ. If our thoughts of Him be low, our faith in Him will be weak, and our affections towards Him cold and inefficient. Let us take the Apostles for our models as to this subject, for they were under the guidance of the Spirit: and their writings abundantly prove that their thoughts of Him were most sublime.—We may here add, that our thoughts of Christ furnish one test by which we may examine ourselves, whether we are, or are not, partakers of the Spirit; or in what measure we are partakers of Him. He is especially the revealer and glorifier of Christ; and consequently

where He is, Christ must be known and magnified. —Without lofty thoughts of the blessed Emmanuel, with the spiritual and practical fruits or results of them, how can we presume to flatter ourselves that we are his true disciples? Lastly,

6. Every one ought seriously and faithfully to apply these things to himself. ‘Has the Spirit of truth led me, and is He leading me, into all truth? Has He made me, and is He making me, spiritually and effectually acquainted with the doctrines of the gospel? Has He caused me, and does He cause me, to know the glory of Christ—of his person, work, and offices?’ Such are the questions which every Christian ought to propose to himself. Delusion may assume a thousand forms: we can only beseech you to guard against them, and to seek with earnestness, in humble and persevering prayer, the Spirit of truth; that you may know Christ here in the kingdom of grace,—behold Him with joy when you shall see Him on the throne of his glory,—and be received into his kingdom above, to reign and rejoice in his presence through all eternity.

SERMON XXIII.

The Sorrowing Disciples comforted.

ST. JOHN, xvi. 16—22.

A little while, and ye shall not see me : and again, A little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me ; and again, A little while, and ye shall see me : and, Because I go to the Father ? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while ? we cannot tell what he saith. Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me : and again, A little while and ye shall see me ? Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice : and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come : but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow : but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

THE intercourse which had subsisted between our blessed Lord and his disciples had been, we may readily conceive, most pleasing and affectionate : but his departure from them, repeatedly mentioned in this last discourse, and the announcement of

which had drawn a gloom over their minds, was directly opposed, as we have often observed, to their favourite views and cherished hopes. It was entirely subversive of their fond expectations respecting his kingdom: and they regarded it as the termination of a delightful friendship. To soothe their minds, to remove their painful thoughts, and to elevate their drooping spirits, our Lord recurs here to the approaching event, and advances such assurances as were calculated to impart the purest comfort, and to reconcile them to the bereavement which they were about to sustain. In the verses which we are to consider at present, there are three subjects that demand our attention: What our Lord advances respecting himself; the perplexity of the disciples; and the remarks which He advanced for their consolation.

I. We are to examine what our Lord advances respecting Himself. ‘A little while, and ye shall not see me; and, Again a little while, and ye shall see me; because I go to the Father.’—We may suppose that our Lord here referred primarily to his burial, when He would not be seen by his disciples, and to the period immediately subsequent to his resurrection, when He would hold personal intercourse with them again. They lamented his departure from them, as being the loss of their chief and only friend: and He comforted them with the assurance of a speedy return. ‘I am now about to go to the Father; to return to the possession of my original and acquired glory; for my redeeming work upon earth will be speedily accomplished:

but although I am soon not to be seen by you, being about to be laid in the grave ; yet I shall rise again, and show myself to you satisfactorily before I ascend to the mediatorial throne.' Such, perhaps, is the literal meaning of our Lord's words : but we cannot refuse to assign to them a further spiritual meaning. He had already said to them, ' I will not leave you comfortless ; I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more ; but ye see me : because I live, ye shall live also.' To interpret these verses in a mere literal manner, would be to deprive them of all force and spirit : and the language of the text is similar to them. The disciples were to be enlightened by the truth through the influence of the Holy Spirit ; and then, by virtue of their faith and knowledge, they would see Christ spiritually as ever present with them, in agreement with his final assurance, ' And, lo, I am with you alway unto the end of the world.' The full persuasion of having their ever-living Head always with them, the object of faith and not of corporeal vision, was to be to them the source of the purest consolation in future life.

And with regard to ourselves, the spiritual apprehension of Christ, and the unshaken conviction of his perpetual presence with us, is the exalted and consolatory privilege of true believers. They look unto Jesus with the eye of faith : they see Him in the Scriptures and in religious ordinances : they see Him at the right hand of God, exercising his various offices as Head over all things to the Church : and they see and acknowledge Him as a

present Saviour, who watches over them, feels a tender sympathy for them, and confers upon them every needful blessing. A present Saviour seen by faith is the support, comfort, and joy of spiritually-minded Christians. With these words of the text before them, they may indulge in pious and happy meditation. 'A little while, and ye shall see me.' The Lord Jesus will revisit our world, and will be seen by all men, to the joy of his true followers, and to the confusion of those who reject Him. He is now with his Father, invested with glory and dominion, and performing his gracious purposes in the world. In due time the cloud of separation will be removed, and He will be seen in his perfection and majesty. The evils which we now deplore will be removed for ever: and the fields of light, life, and immortality will be unfolded to redeemed and sanctified souls in their beauty and magnificence. The day will come when the sufferings of the Church will terminate. No more will she clothe herself in sackcloth; no more will the waves of affliction roll around her; and no more will the arrows of ruthless assailants be aimed against her: for she, the mystic Bride, clad in the garments of salvation, will rejoice in the presence of her Bridegroom. 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.' To see the Saviour here by faith, is heaven begun: to see Him in immediate vision, is heaven perfected.—Thus, ye followers of Christ! let the words which He spoke to his

disciples for their comfort, prove a source of unfailing comfort to you. 'A little while, and ye shall see me.'

II. We now consider the Perplexity of the disciples. 'Then said some of the disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me; and, again, A little while, and ye shall see me; and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? We cannot tell what he saith.'—Although our Lord had repeatedly foretold his death and resurrection, it is evident that they had not duly considered his declarations: and thus they were exceedingly perplexed by what He had now advanced. They were desirous of understanding it; but in vain did they repeat his words, and endeavour to discover their meaning.

1. We ought not to be surprised if we find obscurity in some of the words of Christ. His language is most plain and simple; but it frequently conveys the most profound truths. The disciples had conversed with Him during a considerable time: yet how little did they know of his instructions! We also have the greatest religious privileges: and how little do we know of divine matters! Do you suppose that you know the Gospel because you hear it? Are you intelligent in religion, because you hear many pious discourses? To cherish any notion of this sort, is to deceive yourselves. Is a man a philosopher by gazing on the surfaces of things, and by describing a few of their external appearances? Those who read the Scrip-

tures with reflection, will often find difficulties in them; and they may say with the disciples, 'We cannot tell what he saith.' Those who read them, and find no difficulty, must be suspected of reading without thought, and therefore without benefit. For,

2. Divine instruction is essential to the right understanding of religious truth. The obscurity to which we refer does not arise from language or local customs, or from other matters of this sort, but from our inability to apprehend sacred truth in a spiritual manner. The darkness and weakness of the natural understanding are great: and the disaffection of the natural heart to the peculiar truths of the gospel is strong. We may have outward privileges as the disciples had, and yet continue, as they did, wrong or defective in our views. We may know the words and the facts of Scripture, and we may speculate about them; and we may remain unacquainted with the spirituality of its truths. The solution of the circumstance is easy. The mind and heart of man are in a disordered state, and a divine influence must act upon them with a restoring efficacy, before the words of truth become the words of light and life to the soul. He who has not the Spirit of Christ cannot spiritually apprehend the words of Christ. Further,

3. A spirit of reflection and inquiry is indispensably necessary. We see it exemplified in the disciples: and every one will do well to imitate them. We know not a more unpromising state of mind than that of one who thinks that he knows every

thing in religion, while in reality he knows nothing in it aright. He feels no difficulty, uses no reflection, proposes no question, and walks onward in the darkness of a proud mind. The disciples repeated the expressions of our Lord, pondered them, asked questions, and endeavoured to discover what they signified; and not being able to succeed, they avowed their ignorance. If we ask why one part of our people are such strangers to the gospel, and why another part of them are so imperfectly acquainted with it, one reply may be given which is applicable to each class—they are too indolent to imitate the disciples. We maintain the absolute need of divine influence; but we also maintain the absolute need of personal exertion; of all the labours of an humble, thoughtful, and inquiring frame of mind. Our exertions without divine influence will never make us wise unto salvation: but we have no warrant to expect the divine influence as long as we neglect to make our best exertions. Once more,

4. A thoughtful, humble, and inquiring spirit will be abundantly rewarded. The disciples were anxious to obtain information: their divine Master relieved them in their perplexity, and poured a flood of light and consolation upon their souls. When men are truly desirous of knowing the truth, and rightly use the appointed means of instruction, calling forth all their faculties into exercise, acknowledging their weakness, and looking up with a prayerful mind to the Father of lights, their understandings will be opened, and they will be led to

the right apprehension of all needful truth. They who seek shall find. The divine Instructor will be given them, who will take the veil from off their minds, scatter the darkness that surrounds them, and cause them to rejoice in the bright shining of the Sun of righteousness. But,

III. We consider the Remarks which our Lord advanced to relieve the perplexity of his disciples.

1. Our blessed Saviour looks upon anxious and inquiring souls with peculiar tenderness and regard. 'Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask Him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me; and again, A little while, and ye shall see me?'—Our Saviour knows the heart of man. In our darkness and perplexity, we may feel oppression and sorrow, and be ashamed to utter our thoughts to our fellow creatures. We may think that no one careth for our souls. But there is One who knows all our thoughts and feelings—the gracious and compassionate Saviour. He sympathises with every troubled soul: and He, by his word, his Spirit, his ministers, will dispel their darkness, remove their doubt and anguish, and inspire them with comfort and joy. What an encouraging thought is this for all who are conscious of their ignorance, and who are desirous of being savingly acquainted with the truth as it is in Jesus! To such we say, Your anxiety to be instructed cannot be greater than the readiness of Christ to instruct you. But, further,

2. Our blessed Saviour does not conceal from

his followers, that sorrow will be part of their portion upon earth. 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful.' This prediction was fulfilled in the case of the disciples, when our Lord was crucified and laid in the grave: for then their grief was great; and great, too, we may conceive, was the exultation of the Jews, who had accomplished their object, and probably flattered themselves that they had obtained the victory.

But that declaration, 'the world shall rejoice,' is fulfilled in every age; for the careless multitude of mankind have their vain delights, and spend their days in giddiness and mirth. They riot in the paths of pleasure and frivolity. 'The harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.' They enjoy health and prosperity: no cloud hangs upon their minds, and no bitter water touches their lips. The dark and evil days are put far from their thoughts, and life is made, as much as possible, a scene of unreflecting levity.

And that declaration respecting the followers of Christ is accurately fulfilled, 'Ye shall weep and lament.' Sorrow is one part of our birth-right, as true Christians. They who are to reap in joy, first sow in tears. Strangers to Christian sorrow, are strangers to Christian joy. True piety begins with consideration and contrition; and these belong to it in its healthful growth. We daily offend; and if we see and feel aright, we daily lament our of-

fences. Our own transgressions and omissions of duty—the wickedness and misery of others,—we cannot think of these without grief and anguish. When we urge you to seek true piety, we urge you to become acquainted with all that is good, glorious, and happy; but we call you also to become acquainted with sorrow, and often to journey in your pilgrim-path weeping. But remember the benediction, ‘Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.’ Let the men of the world account you gloomy and melancholy: but it is far better to mourn on earth with godly sorrow, than to wail mid everlasting darkness in remediless despair. Godly sorrow ‘worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of:’ and a measure of this holy grief is what we wish to see in all true believers. While we readily allow them to entertain Joy as a guest, yet we cannot allow them to dismiss Sorrow. We advocate no gloom, no melancholy, no complaining: but we do not hesitate to say, that where sorrow is unknown, piety also is unknown: and he who once mourned as a penitent, but has outlived his contrite feelings, and has discovered a region whose sky is always bright and calm, has arrived at a point where we should tremble to follow him. True and healthful piety has its joy and peace: but has it not also its sorrow and trouble? But,

3. Our blessed Lord assures his disciples that they shall have joy and happiness. ‘But your sorrow shall be turned into joy.’ This prediction was fulfilled in their case, when they knew that He was

risen from the dead: and thus we read, 'Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.'—But we address this consolatory assurance to all real penitents and mourning believers. Are you real penitents? You deplore the sinfulness of your hearts and lives. You find sin to be an intolerable burden. You dread the divine displeasure, and tremble at a state of condemnation. You bewail your past ingratitude and folly. What do we say to you? 'There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance.' And, patiently waiting on the Lord, 'your sorrow shall be turned into joy.'—Are you walking in darkness, and are your thoughts and feelings distressing? What is said to each of you? 'Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.' In patience possess ye your souls, and in due time 'your sorrow shall be turned into joy.' The clouds and mists which surround you shall be scattered, and 'unto you that fear God shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.'

How many sources of shame and grief do many true believers find in themselves! Their forgetfulness of divine things, their unthankfulness and unprofitableness, the various movements and workings of sin within them, their vain thoughts and worldly affections, occasion them very painful feelings. They do not prosper, according to their apprehensions, in the divine life. They are far from being what they would be—far from performing what they wish to perform. What do we say to such?

Proceed in the way of righteousness with faith, humility, patience, watchfulness, diligence, and prayer. 'Now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.' In due time the gracious and compassionate Jesus will give you 'the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.'


Form, we uniformly teach you, no fanciful views of religion. Trial and distress and sorrow will in various measures be your portion upon earth. But be steadfast; be persevering; and 'your sorrow shall be turned into joy;' into peace and joy in believing here, and hereafter into the perfect joy of heaven. Make no false calculations. There are bright days, and there are dark days for the real Christian: and as a cloud may stain the brightest of them, so may a splendour adorn the darkest of them. There is sorrow, and there is joy in religion: but all that we can say is, whatever be the peculiar complexion of our course, (and various it will doubtless be,) if we mourn as the followers of Christ, we shall also rejoice as his followers. But,

4. Our blessed Lord shows his disciples the true source of joy. 'But I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice.' The disciples did rejoice, as we have already observed, when they were certain of our Lord's resurrection. The counsels, malice, and violence of hell and earth were frustrated: the disciples saw the holy Jesus, the living and triumphant Saviour, according to his express assurance: and they might well feel the most intense gladness.

And here is a delightful lesson for the true Chris-

tian. The source of our sorrow is in ourselves: the source of our joy is in Christ. 'I will see you again.' Christ present to the soul in its holy meditations, seen in his word and ordinances, known by the operations of his Spirit—this is the substantial joy of the pious. They are happy when the current of their thoughts and feelings allows them to say, that they are in Christ, and He in them. But this happiness is frequently suspended: full often doth a cloud, more or less dark and deep, pass between the Sun of righteousness and believing souls: and then doth a sadness pervade the heart, which can be alleviated only by that soothing voice, 'I will see you again.' Jesus will come again, and restore to the soul the joy of salvation: and He will finally come again, when every eye shall see Him, and when the joy of his people shall be perfected, and that for ever. Once more,

5. Our blessed Lord assures his disciples that their joy is inalienable. 'And your joy no man taketh from you.' And thus secure too is the joy of the faithful followers of Christ. The joy of the world is changeable and vanishing. The look, word, or act of a feeble mortal may either produce it, or destroy it, in a moment: or it may be irrecoverably lost in some of the painful events of life. But the true Christian lives as a spiritual and immortal being: his objects are unseen and eternal; and his joy, therefore, is not liable to be affected by the accidents of time. It resides within, pervades the soul, and is maintained by views, principles, and influences which are not dependent on



temporal circumstances. Its possessor may be tried in mind, body, or estate : but he looks up to the Lord of life and glory, and his spirit within him, reposing on the faithful promises of his God and Saviour, is calm and delighted. He shall rejoice in the days of old age : for when the clouds and shadows of the evening are gathering around him, a soft and peculiar glory shall rest upon him, and he shall be seen tranquil in all the mildness and majesty of a pure and unaffected piety. When he is called to pass through the valley of the shadow of death, the light, peace, and joy which he has known in the days of his health and strength will not forsake him ; and the reality and might of grace will support him in the weakness of suffering and dissolving nature.

It is the happiness of the real Christian to drink of a fountain whose waters are not only pure and refreshing, but also unfailing and inexhaustible. All earthly good is alienable in its nature, and such too must be the joy which depends upon the possession of it. Our youthful years may be spent in prosperity and gladness ; but the years will come when we shall be compelled to own, that earthly joy is a plant which may flourish in spring and summer, but which fades and droops in autumn, and which is swept away by the frost and storms of winter. Jesus Christ, the Sun and Centre to whom the believer looks, is 'the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever ;' and those who are truly branches in Him, 'shall bring forth fruit in old age ; they shall be fat and flourishing.' The joy

derived from Him, and from his word, is an abiding joy—a heavenly feeling in the soul, a foretaste of the final bliss.

We conclude with a few remarks.

1. We may here form an important idea with regard to the nature of true piety. It is darkness succeeded by light ; perplexity leading to satisfaction ; distress ending in joy. Religion in the book is a letter ; in the intellect, a notion ; in the heart and soul, principle and affection. If we would be real Christians, we must study the letter, obtain the notion or knowledge, and seek the life and power of the gospel : and then, through whatever trials we may pass, we shall find that piety is consolation, joy, and peace.

2. We may here discover one plain mark of difference between a nominal and a true Christian. The former may read and hear, but he does not think, examine, and apply things to himself. He is satisfied with his present state and views. He lives in thoughtlessness and mirth. His joy and sorrow spring from temporal sources. But the real Christian thinks, examines, and inquires, and obtains at length a sound knowledge of divine truth, and walks in the path of righteousness. He began his pious course with the feelings of the penitent ; and he proceeds in it with the sorrow and joy of the wise and sound believer. Such sorrow and joy are not known by the world : sorrow deep and silent, in which he is humble before God in self-abasement ; and joy pure and serene, derived from that Saviour in whom he believes. Let each

of you consider this obvious difference, and ask himself, 'Am I a nominal or a real Christian?'

3. We may here learn the choice which we ought to make, and the line of conduct which we ought to adopt.—Will you remain satisfied with the joy of the world, with mirth and vanity, and forget the darkness and anguish that lie before you in the eternal state? Is it not far better to suffer the affliction and to partake the sorrows of the righteous, which will be succeeded by everlasting happiness, than to enjoy the transitory pleasures of sin which lead to final misery?—Ye Votaries of the world! your light will soon be extinct in utter darkness; your glory will end in shame, your delight in anguish, and your presumption in despair. Close your eyes, your ears, and your hearts against all that is said to you in the language of exhortation, instruction, or warning; but within a few more years you will be conversant with spiritual things in their reality: and how awful will the disclosures of eternity be to all who spend their days in worldliness, trifling and folly!—Ye servants of Christ! sustain with courageous hearts the pressure of present ill: for your ever-living Head assures you that 'your sorrow shall be turned into joy.' He assures you, as He did his disciples, 'I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.'—Think, ye thoughtless! of these things, and choose the good part, and spend the residue of your days in the service of your God and Saviour, and in careful preparation for eternity.—Persevere, ye righteous! in

the way of truth, holiness, and obedience, unwearied, undaunted, undismayed. If the cup of sorrow be frequently put, in this cloudy, trying, and changing world, into your hands, drink it without reluctance or complaint. A gracious Father has mingled the ingredients which are in it; and though it be bitter to the taste, yet it is a cup of health, conducing much through his grace, to your present and eternal happiness. 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory : while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen : for the things which are seen are temporal ; but the things which are not seen are eternal.'

SERMON XXIV.

The Disciples satisfied.

ST. JOHN, xvi. 23—33.

And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God. Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

OUR blessed Lord had announced to the disciples his approaching departure to the Father; and his

language had produced no small perplexity in their minds : but He explained to a certain extent what He had said. We have considered some of his consolatory declarations, and are now to examine those which remain. Whether we read the whole of his discourse on this occasion, or any part of it, we may well exclaim, How different is this from the manner of men ! Here is no gloom or sadness, no invective or bitterness, but, on the contrary, serenity, grandeur, tenderness, and love. His immediate object was to confirm the minds of his followers in their adherence to Him, and to prepare them for their future labours and for clearer discoveries of the truth. He did not assume the peculiar office of the Paraclete, by unfolding what was not to be unfolded until his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension had taken place. He only advanced a general statement, leaving the full development of it to a subsequent period and to another Agent. But with what sublimity, simplicity, and affection ; with what decision, freedom, and ease ; did He speak ; as one equally familiar with the invisible world, the counsels of God, and the heart of man !

I. We examine the consolatory assurances which are contained in the text : these are four.

1. An assurance with regard to prayer ; ver. 23—26. We may thus paraphrase these verses. ‘ The time is near when you, being instructed in my doctrines, will have no need of proposing any questions to me : but I now assure you, that whatever needful blessings you shall ask of God in my name,

He will grant them to you. Hitherto, unacquainted with my office, you have not prayed in my name ; but I now direct you to do so : and I declare to you, that your prayers shall be answered to your abundant joy. The time will come when you will pray thus ; and I need not say, that I will intercede with the Father for you, since I have already said that I will pray Him, and He will give you another Comforter ; and you will then understand the nature of my mediation and intercession by the discoveries which will be given you.'

We may remark, that prayer, to be effectual, must be offered to God in the name of Christ. If our petitions be presented to Him in Christ's name, in full reliance on his merits and intercession, they are acceptable to Him, and will be availing. If we pray aright, we pray with a deep sense of our sinfulness and unworthiness, and with a full conviction that we have no access to God, that our requests are not pleasing to Him, and that we receive nothing from Him, but through our great High Priest and Advocate. As without prayer there is no true piety, so without entire reliance on Christ there is no availing prayer.—But prayer is acceptable and availing when it is offered to God in the name of Christ. Holy joy, sacred delight, pure satisfaction are now, as in the case of the disciples, the blessed results of believing prayer. Do we tremble before the majesty of the just and holy God ? Are we conscious of our unworthiness ? Do we see the imperfection which belongs to our best services ? We remember the declaration of our Lord : and

we know that if we pray as He has taught us, our prayers are accepted, and will be answered, as Infinite Wisdom sees good. It is our duty to pray, believe, and wait; persuaded that God will bless us, and that we shall rejoice in his salvation. Here is the love of God—here is the fruit of redemption:—God holds intercourse with us, and blesses us, if we draw near to Him in the way of his appointment and in a right spirit.

2. An assurance respecting a clear revelation of the Father: ‘I shall show you plainly of the Father.’ Our Lord often used parables and proverbs, expressing the highest truths under material and familiar images: but there was a veil that rested on what He uttered. Here He speaks of a more clear development, which, as to the disciples, may refer to his own intercourse with them after his resurrection, or more especially to their complete illumination by the Holy Spirit.—The true knowledge of God is the great point in religion: and how shall it be obtained? We may go to the Bible: but ‘the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.’ We may go to the public ordinances of religion: but the voice of the minister is a mere sound in our ears. Our Lord has ‘shown us plainly of the Father:’ but there is a wide difference between the revelation of the letter and that of the Spirit: and no one knows God savingly unless he is enlightened by the word and by the Spirit of truth. We must have the outward light;

but we must also have the inward light : that is, the outward light must visit the soul, not intellectually but spiritually, so as to be efficient—subduing and transforming. In this sort of illumination, we see the work of the Paraclete : and the humble and devout Christian, being thus enlightened, finds the Bible to be a book, not of parables and hard sayings, but of clear, purifying, consoling, and edifying instruction. By this spiritual illumination we obtain the true and saving knowledge of God as He is revealed in the gospel of Christ. We are made to know his adorable perfections and his counsels of mercy, love, and grace. We are no longer nominal, or formal, or intellectual Christians ; but we are believers, whose knowledge of God, and of all divine things, is living and influential.

3. An assurance respecting the love of God : ‘ For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.’—Our Lord assured his disciples that the Father loved them : but by what means did they stand thus in the divine favour ? They loved Christ, and believed in Him. They loved Christ, and therefore God loved them. And let us duly consider, that unless faith and love exist and rule in our souls, we are not of the number of those whom God loves : while, on the contrary, if those principles are ours, we may assure ourselves that the love of our heavenly Father rests upon us.—God loves all with a love of benevolence, and has provided salvation for them, and offers it to them :

but He loves true believers in Christ with a love of complacency. They are in Christ: they form a part of his mystical body: and as the Father is well pleased with the Son, so is He well pleased with those who are in Him: and we may ascertain the manner in which God regards us by the manner in which we regard Christ. Instead, therefore, of deluding ourselves, let us examine our hearts. If we have the testimony of our consciences that we have faith and love, let us with humble joy take the consolation that the complacential love of God is ours; and that as the splendour of the sun rests upon the unfolding flower, so does the favour of God rest upon the pious soul, and impart to it that health, strength, and beauty which fit it for the eternal paradise.

4. An assurance respecting Himself. ‘I came forth from the Father, am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.’—Our Lord here speaks of his incarnation, crucifixion, and ascension: and by this declaration the minds of the disciples were not only relieved, but satisfied; for He thus described his character as Mediator. He, the eternal Word, ‘was made in the likeness of men:’ He suffered an ignominious death: and He afterwards resumed his original glory, receiving also the peculiar honour and dignity that belonged to his mediatorial office. And often let us direct our attention to this stupendous theme; so well calculated to strengthen our faith, animate our love, and confirm our hope. Here let us behold the wisdom and love of God; die to our-

selves and to the world ; always approach God in complete dependence on Christ and his intercession ; look upward to the world where our Saviour is enthroned in the highest majesty ; and order our conversation, through his grace, as those who expect, when this life is ended, to be for ever with Him.

II. We now examine the Conviction which was wrought in the minds of the disciples by the assurances and declarations of our Lord.—

1. They understood his words. ‘Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.’ They had a little before been perplexed by his assertions ; but his more explicit statement removed their perplexity, and they regarded Him as one who spoke plainly.—When Christ speaks to the soul, accompanying his word with his Spirit, darkness is dispelled from the mind, and those doctrines of the gospel which were thought to be obscure, or perhaps unreasonable, are clearly apprehended, and are found to be most wise and excellent.

2. They were convinced of his Omniscience. ‘Now we are sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should tell thee.’ They found by his words that He had a perfect insight into the thoughts of their minds. His language proved to them that He knew all things. And let every one of us be fully persuaded that our Lord knows the hearts of all men. ‘Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight : but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.’

3. They were persuaded of his dignity and Messiahship. 'By this we believe that thou camest forth from God.' Some peculiar efficacy appears to have accompanied the last expressions of our Lord: the disciples viewed Him as He who came forth from God, and believed in Him accordingly. Their minds were enlightened; a conviction was wrought in their hearts; they beheld Him in an exalted point of view; and they were satisfied.

See here the progress of religion in the soul. Before we are excited to attend to religion, we walk in darkness: but when through grace we study it and receive it, the gloom and mist which encompassed the soul are dispersed. Then the Saviour is discovered; his character is seen; his work is understood; and He is acknowledged to be 'the Way and the Truth and the Life.' The happy individual then enters into the light of truth, seeks its blessings and operations, and rejoices in the method of salvation which the gospel unfolds to his delighted and adoring soul. He can look to Christ, and say, in the words of the disciples, 'I believe that thou camest forth from God.' He can proceed, and say, 'I believe that thou art with God, and that thou art both able and willing to save to the uttermost all who come unto God through Thee.' Faith in God as a reconciled Father, and faith in Christ as the only Mediator and Intercessor, are the blessed results of an effectual illumination. This true evangelical piety is a sacred process in the soul—sacred in its origin, nature, and issue—by which it is brought to the right and

full acknowledgment of Christ, and thus to the participation here of life, peace, and hope, and hereafter of final and perfect bliss.—Account yourselves true Christians when the words of Christ have come home to your souls with light and power, so that you acknowledge Him, in spirit and in truth, to be the Son of God and the Saviour of repenting and believing sinners.

III. We consider, lastly, the further remarks which our Lord made to his disciples, when He had heard their profession of faith in Him.—Shall He not use the language of congratulation and joy to them, as seeing in them the fruit of his labours and instructions? Shall He not speak to them as having arrived at that point in pious attainment which would be followed by all that is excellent and happy? Our Lord knew man; He knew the world; He knew what piety is; and his language to them is that of wisdom and reflection, not of rhapsody and feeling.

1. He warns them of their weakness. ‘Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.’ Though they had made a right confession, they seem to have spoken too much in the spirit of human confidence. Their faith was not yet mature, and very probably they thought far too highly of their attainments. Our Lord, therefore, checks their ardour, and calls them to reflection, by uttering a prophecy which was ful-

filled when 'they all forsook him and fled.' How little did they think of the wide difference between a bold profession made in seclusion and quietness, and a steadfast adherence to their sacred cause in the season of trial and danger! In vain are our minds enlightened, and in vain have we the best convictions, unless we are always strengthened and upheld by divine grace. Let us remember our own weakness, and our entire dependance on almighty power; and let us watch over ourselves with the greatest jealousy, lest we find the hour of confidence and boasting a prelude to unfaithfulness, declension, and disgrace.

When our Lord warned his disciples of their weakness, and told them how inconsistently they would act, He assured them that He, though deserted by them, would not be left alone; since the Father was with Him, and would afford Him all needful assistance. The pious may sometimes prove the instability of man, and learn the impropriety of expecting much even from those who in some seasons were ardent in their attachment to them, and strong in their avowal of friendship for them. If human friendship be a fragrant rose, and such indeed it is when true and pure, yet it is not a rose without a thorn. But when forsaken or forgotten by men, let their consolation flow from such a text as this, 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble.'

2. Our Lord warns his disciples of the trials to which they would be exposed. 'In the world ye shall have tribulation.' They had avowed their

faith in Him as one 'come forth from God.' To prevent erroneous views and ungrounded expectations, He informs them that their attachment to Him, instead of leading them to temporal ease and honour, would be certainly attended with trials, vexations, and sufferings. While He pointed out to them the only path to happiness and glory, He did not deceive or amuse them by exhibiting a splendid and imaginary picture of human life, but plainly taught them that they would have a cross to sustain.

And let not the true disciples of Christ forget this assurance, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation.' If we suppose, that by seriously attending to religion we shall turn the wilderness into an absolute paradise, we cherish an idle fancy: for our gay dreams will be contradicted by the sober and real experience of the heart in our Christian course. Our Lord himself was 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief:' and his faithful followers, (many, and pure, and unfailing as their joys are,) will be more or less conversant with grief and trouble. Difficulties of one sort or other will frequently meet them in their path. If there be outward peace, there may be inward strife and anguish: or if there be inward peace, there may be outward trials and vexations. Clouds, even deep clouds, may often obscure the sun: and storms, even furious storms, may often trouble their sky. Such may be their case, though none of those around them are conscious of what they see or feel. 'Many are the troubles of the righteous.'

But they are not disconsolate. The brightest bow is on the darkest cloud : and the graces and virtues of the believer are heightened and purified by tribulation. They are looking to an unfading crown : but they must be content to bear a cross while they are here—thus being in their measure conformable to Christ in all respects.

3. Our Lord comforts his disciples. ‘ These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation : but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world.’ He began, and He concludes his valedictory discourse with the soothing language of consolation. The true comfort and blessedness of the disciples were to spring from their faith in Him, from their union with Him, and from the influences of the abiding Spirit. Walking in faith and love, they would enjoy inward satisfaction, whatever were their sorrows and trials in the world. The world would be their enemy, as it had been his : but as He conquered the world, the prince of evil and all his agents, visible or invisible, and demonstrated Himself to be superior to all wily arts and seducing temptations, so would they conquer the world, being strengthened by his grace and following his example. It was, therefore, their privilege and duty to be of good cheer, and to be confident and courageous, banishing fear and solicitude, notwithstanding the tribulations with which their earthly course would be chequered.

And here is the consolation of the faithful servants of God. Whatever may be their condition

as to the temporal life, they have peace in Christ, —real blessedness by faith in Him, union to Him, and communion with Him. Though assaulted by enemies, oppressed with cares, and perplexed with changes, yet they may say, ‘In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that hath loved us.’ Peace in the world, and from the world, is the portion of worldly men : but peace in Christ, and from Him, is the portion of all faithful souls. Subjection to the world, and conformity to it, form the thralldom in which careless Christians are living : for their boasted liberty is, if it be rightly viewed, the most degraded and galling slavery : and the peace which they enjoy in this state, if we understand by peace satisfaction, security, and tranquillity, is composed of low gratification, unmeaning presumption, and lethargic repose. But separation from the world, and victory over it, are important branches of the pure liberty with which Christ makes his people free. They expect troubles ; and these they will find : but they have divine peace within ; even peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ; which is not only the parent of tranquillity, but also of joy.

We conclude the discourse with a few general remarks.—The subject which we have endeavoured to unfold is one that demands our frequent and serious consideration. Without an intimate familiarity with it, as containing a series of truths which are to be experimentally known, we cannot be prosperous and happy Christians. It is by no means difficult, especially in these days, to make a

specious profession of religion. Notions are easily acquired; feelings are easily excited; and the tongue is always ready to express the actings of the mind. To entertain a hope of eternal happiness is natural to man: but such hope is mere presumption, as long as we continue strangers to the mercy, grace, and power of our blessed Redeemer.

The Lord Jesus Christ is revealed to us in the gospel as the only Mediator between God and man: and we are taught to view Him as He, for whose sake, and through whom, all spiritual blessings are conferred upon us. Whether we consider the acceptance of our prayers, or the illumination of our minds in the true knowledge of God, or the love of God resting upon us, it is through Him, as our Advocate with the Father, as our ever-living High Priest and Intercessor, that we obtain these things. If we wish for victory over the world and our spiritual enemies, for patience in suffering and trial, and for the enjoyment of true happiness, it is to Him only that we are to look for these inestimable benefits. He lives, and rules, and intercedes, and is the Head of the Church, which, as being his body, receives from Him every thing on which its prosperity depends.

Let every one ask himself, whether he knows Christ as the only Mediator; whether he approaches the Father in and through Him; whether he prays in His name, with the feelings of a self-renouncing and believing soul; whether he seeks the knowledge of God by the word and Spirit of Christ; whether he looks for the love of God to rest upon

him purely as a believer in his Son ; whether, amid the tribulation of this world, he enjoys in his heart the peace promised by the Redeemer to his people ; whether, by the grace of the Holy Spirit and after the example of Christ, he overcomes the world and all his spiritual enemies ; whether, finally, he knows and understands all these things, not merely speculatively as so many important particulars of the Christian revelation, but inwardly, deeply, and increasingly as the truths and facts which are, to speak so, mingled, and that in the way of conscious feeling, with his spiritual existence. Into these matters it becomes every one to inquire, not only as to the things themselves, and not in their relation to other persons, but with an immediate reference to his own soul ; persuaded that he is the true Christian, and he only, who is experimentally acquainted with them.

While we rejoice to unfold to you the goodness of God, so conspicuous in our redemption, and expatiate with delight on the grace and glory of the Redeemer ; we would exhort you, with the utmost earnestness, to be serious about your salvation. Pray with fervour and perseverance for the manifold agency of the Holy Spirit, in order that you may be led into the effectual apprehension of all things that belong to your present and everlasting peace. Awake from sleep ; cast away your indifference ; and learn to be thoughtful and devout. The worldly and the thoughtless may treat with derision all that is sacred and solemn ; and we are perfectly aware, that the subject of spiritual reli-

gion, and many of the terms of inspiration in which it is expressed, are not infrequently spoken of in a light, sarcastic, and profane manner. But if religion be any thing, it is every thing:—if it be any thing, it is spiritual; it is a divine life in the soul; it is the mercy of God and the power of God in Christ Jesus known by the soul, according to the renovating agency from above. We beseech you, that, remembering death, and judgment, and eternity—remembering the love of God and the tender compassions of our gracious Redeemer—you lay the subject of spiritual religion to heart.

With regard to the pious among you, surely our subject in this discourse is well calculated to promote your edification and comfort. With the truth of our Lord's declarations you are well acquainted: for you know, and that by the grace which has wrought in your souls the good work of religion, that He is our Mediator and Intercessor, that humble and believing prayer is answered, that faith in Him produces solid peace in the soul, and that the world is in one way or other a scene of trial. That you are not what you wish to be, that you are dissatisfied with yourselves, and that you are familiar with the feelings of sorrow and with the language of complaint, are matters that we well know: but right as it is to retain a due sense of yourselves, with regard to your imperfection and manifold deficiencies; yet your great and proper work is to walk daily in faith and obedience; more spiritual, more holy, and more fruitful in every good word and work. Faithfully attend to this: and then will

the love of God rest upon you, and your consolation and peace in Christ Jesus will abound. Be courageous, as the good soldiers of the Captain of our salvation : be steadfast and persevering : be patient and diligent. Then will a brighter light shine around you and within you : the blessed influences of mercy and grace will prevail with a victorious might : you will grow up and flourish, even beneath an inclement sky, in all the beauty of holy attainments : and your final inheritance will be in that world where there is no tribulation, but perfect peace and joy for ever and ever.

SERMON XXV.

The Prayer of our Lord for Himself.

ST. JOHN, xvii. 1—5.

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come: glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

‘OUR blessed, and ever to be blessed High Priest, fulfilled all legal righteousness, from the beginning to the end of his sacred function. As Aaron, the first Jewish high priest, at his consecration, was required to be washed in water, and to have his head anointed with oil, so Christ was consecrated to be the world’s High Priest at his Baptism, when he was washed in water, and anointed with the Holy Spirit, descending from heaven, and resting visibly on his head. During the course of it, He preached the Gospel to the poor—to the poor in spirit. And


as the Jewish high priest, on the day of atonement, was required to make annual intercession for himself, for his household, the Priests and Levites, and for the whole nation, so our all-sufficient High Priest, once for all, on this his great day of atonement, solemnly interceded with God his Father, for Himself, that He might be received into glory, his original glory in heaven; for his Household, the Apostles and disciples, that God would preserve them in his Name, or in the true religion; give them a spirit of unity and concord; and protect them in and from the wicked world; and that finally they might partake of his glory in heaven, and also be supported by his love and presence on earth; and also for all future Believers, through their preaching, that they might be endued with the same spirit of unity and concord; and for the Conversion of the whole world.' [*Dr. Hales.*]

It has been observed of the chapter which we are now to consider, that it contains 'the easiest words, but the deepest sense, of any in all the Scriptures.' It is peculiarly spiritual, profound, and sublime. Truths are advanced in it which we cannot comprehend: and the investigation of it ought to be conducted with the greatest seriousness and humility. It has been said with great justice, that 'Scripture abhors generality;' and it might be said with equal justice, that it abhors metaphysical refinement. Aware of the difficulties that lie before us, we shall observe one rule, Not to make obscure matters contradict those which are plain: and if we cannot interpret the former

by the latter, we shall view it as being above our comprehension, acknowledge our ignorance, and not venture to deduce from obscure premises a principle irreconcilable with one that is drawn from plain premises.

‘These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said.’ He spake audibly, that his words might be heard by his disciples for their instruction and consolation: and he looked up towards heaven, thereby declaring a deep sense of the majesty of his Father, the elevation of his mind above all earthly things, his holy boldness,—as also distinguishing himself from the Jewish priests, who looked in their prayers to an earthly sanctuary. ‘Father, the hour is come.’ He addressed God in a peculiar sense as his Father: and thus the God of our salvation is revealed to us as being ‘the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ ‘The hour is come:’ the hour of suffering. He had thought of this hour with strong emotion: ‘Now is my soul troubled: and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this purpose came I unto this hour.’ Here is feeling, and here is resignation to the divine will: but in the text no reference is made to any painful feeling; the hour is still contemplated, and it is preceded by solemn and fervent prayer. Admirable example! When we see trials at hand, and especially when death approaches, let us remember our blessed Saviour, and, with hearts and countenances directed towards heaven, pray to his Father and our Father.

I. We are now to examine the petition which



our Lord offered for Himself with regard to his Sufferings, and the pleas with which He urged it.

1. We consider the petition. ‘Glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee.’ Here is the petition, and the reason of its being offered. Our Lord prayed that He himself might be glorified, in order that He might glorify the Father.—Christ had been glorified during his life and ministry. Angels announced his birth: eastern wise men did Him homage: at his baptism He was acknowledged to be the beloved Son: his doctrine and miracles proved Him to be the Messiah. But the hour of severe trial was before Him; and He prays that He might still be glorified; be supported in his sufferings, and be honoured with such manifestations of divine power, both in and after his death, as would make it evident, to the confusion of his enemies, and to confirmation of the faith of his followers, that He was the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of mankind. He had observed, with immediate reference to Himself, ‘Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.’ This was saying, in other words, that He was to undergo death, to rise again, to ascend into heaven, and to produce, by the mission of the renewing Spirit, a goodly spiritual increase, a harvest of faithful disciples. If He were supported until He had completed his work of redemption, the gospel would be propagated in the world, and his glory, his perfections, would be known and acknowledged in all ages: He would be viewed and honoured as the great

High Priest, who had offered the one great and availing sacrifice for sin ; as the conqueror of death, of the grave, and of all the powers of darkness ; as the Mediator between God and man.

The prayer of our blessed Lord was answered ; He was glorified : and we need not enumerate, (for we have referred to the subject in a former discourse,) the circumstances which preceded, attended, and followed his crucifixion. Mark every thing, in the light of the inspired history, which took place from Gethsemane till He ascended to heaven from Olivet, and what is the conclusion in which you rest ? Our blessed Lord was indeed glorified. He walked through the valley of the shadow of death, midst sufferings unknown : but there was a glory that rested upon Him, and shone forth, in every step of his progress through it. He died ; He sank into the grave : but his resurrection proved Him to be the conqueror of both. He fell ; but in falling He ‘destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.’ We see Him in sorrow and darkness, in ignominy and weakness, in suffering and death : but the Father gave ample testimony to the dignity of his character and to the truth of his claims. His divine perfection beamed forth with the mildest radiance through the gloom ; and whether we look to Gethsemane or to Calvary, we readily acknowledge Him to be ‘the Christ, the Son of the living God.’

The reason or design of the petition is stated in these words ‘that thy Son also may glorify thee.’ And how was the Father to be glorified by the

Son ? It was, (as we stated on a former occasion,) by having his adorable perfections made known to men in and by Him ;—and this not merely in the way of discovery, but also of efficiency, so that the Father would be acknowledged and honoured by a goodly host of humble, believing, and joyful worshippers to the end of time. We see the glory of God when we see his wisdom and power, holiness and justice, love and mercy : and we glorify God when we celebrate his perfections as they are revealed to us in the gospel, and when we are such, in the frame of our souls and in our conduct, as the spiritual acknowledgment of those perfections requires us to be. If our Lord had not been supported through his redeeming work, He could not have glorified God : for any failure in the last acts of it, would have rendered abortive whatever He had previously accomplished. But our Lord, as we have seen, was supported, was glorified, was proved to be the Messiah : and this led to, for in fact it involved, the glorification of the Father. When He had wrought out redemption, by teaching, doing, suffering, and rising from the grave, and ascending to glory ; and when the Holy Spirit had been sent forth ; the Gospel was published in all lands, and multitudes beheld the glory of the true God, and believed in, and worshipped Him in spirit and in truth, and walked before Him in holiness and righteousness. By the completed work of Christ, the Father was glorified also in the view of all ranks of intelligent beings in the universe : and He will be glorified in and by that work through

never-ending ages. Divine truth has hitherto been subject on the theatre of this world to great vicissitudes; but we are assured that it shall prevail: and the final issue of things will be, that, in the eternal salvation of countless multitudes of the human race, the Father will be glorified as the consequence of his having glorified the Son.—Thus the petition of our Lord was full of love, having a direct reference to the salvation of men.

2. We proceed to consider the pleas with which the petition was urged.

i. The fulfilment of the everlasting counsels of mercy and grace between the Father and the Son. ‘As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.’—This is a passage of which we dare not say positively, that this or that is the true interpretation of it. ‘There is in it,’ as has been well observed, ‘much of mystery, which, happily, we need not endeavour to penetrate.’ If our interpretation of any difficult passage of Scripture contradict the general and clear tenour of Scripture, our interpretation must be wrong. Undoubtedly there were transactions between the Father and the Son respecting Redemption, before the foundation of the world; but it is not for us to say precisely what they were. What we know is this; In the light of Revelation we see that God is a moral Governor, and that we are moral and responsible agents: and therefore we cannot conceive, that there is any thing in those counsels at variance with what is plainly revealed. Our Lord

refers in the text to those transactions; and if we cannot reconcile his words with the general tenour of Scripture, let us not cavil, but confess our ignorance: we only see in part. Our Lord asserts, that authority had been given Him over all men, and with the design that He should give eternal life to as many as the Father had given him. The sacrifice of Christ was made for all mankind: the authority given Him was universal. He himself has told us, 'No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him:' and further, 'How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.' We can reduce the subject to a practical one—not that we pretend to solve the mystery. True believers are the persons given to Christ: they who truly believe are drawn of the Father: those are drawn of the Father who pray for, and receive, the Holy Spirit;—and in this practical form we leave the subject.

Our Lord's plea, if we be correct, is in fact a reference to the power, truth, and unchangeableness of God: it amounts to this:—'In everlasting counsels I am appointed the Mediator and Redeemer, that thou mayest be revealed in me as a reconciled Father, and that I may bring many sons to glory—even all those who truly receive the divine record. In order, therefore, that these counsels may be fulfilled, I beseech Thee to glorify me,—to support me, and to make it manifest that I am the promised Deliverer.'—And now let us briefly observe, In what an interesting point of view do we here see the gra-

cious scheme of redemption ! The Father glorifies the Son : the Son glorifies the Father : this mutual glorification proceeds according to an eternal counsel, and has for its object the salvation of Christ's faithful people. Instead of vainly and presumptuously attempting to unfold unrevealed counsels, let us behold with gratitude, admiration, and joy the love of Jehovah, and pray that we may be of the number of those who are Christ's people.

ii. The second plea of our Lord is, the absolute necessity that men should have the knowledge of God and of Christ. ' And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' Eternal life or blessedness is the gift of God through Jesus Christ, which was, according to the eternal counsel, to be given to Christ's people—to all true believers in Him. But they, in order to receive this gift, must know and rightly acknowledge both the Father and the Son : therefore a revelation of both in their adorable perfections was essential : and this revelation depended on Christ's being glorified by his Father in the completion of his redeeming work. If the Son had not been glorified, there would have been no revelation either of the Father or of the Son : without such revelation there would have been no knowledge and no acknowledgment of them : without that knowledge and acknowledgment there would have been no attainment of the gift of eternal life. Thus the salvation of man was directly connected with that glorification of the Son for which He prayed.

But here is weighty instruction for every one of us. If we would obtain the gift of eternal life, what are we to do? We are to seek the knowledge of God as glorified by his Son:—as revealed in and by Him in his glory or perfection; and also the knowledge of Christ as glorified by his Father; as revealed to us, and demonstrated to be the Redeemer, the Mediator, the Intercessor, omnipotent to save. This knowledge is not to be a mere intellectual view and assent, but a spiritual and efficient acknowledgement of the Father and of the Son, transforming the soul, changing its state and its character: it must be a saving, humbling, purifying, gladdening, and elevating knowledge of the Father and of the Son. And daily ought our prayers to ascend to the Father of mercies in the name of Jesus, that, in the faithful use of our means of grace, and by the operation of the Holy Spirit, more and more of this saving knowledge may be granted to us, that in our views, principles, affections, and conduct we may be such persons as the gospel requires us to be,—such, therefore, as shall finally inherit ‘life eternal.’

iii. The third plea of our Lord is, the completion of his appointed work. ‘I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.’ He had glorified God, had shown his perfections, by all the words and actions of his life. He had perfectly obeyed his will: he had revealed Him as a Being who is holy, just, and merciful: he had taught a religion the most sublime and consolatory, pure and benevolent,

practical and useful. He had taught men their nature and condition, their duty and prospects, their chief good and the means of obtaining it. In doing all this, He had fulfilled the ancient prophecies and types : and He now observes that He had finished the work which had been assigned to Him. He came to ‘preach good tidings unto the meek ; to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.’ Having done all things that were to be performed before the last great act of obedience, He urges this, with the greatest propriety, as a plea for his glorification ;—for his being supported through what yet remained to be done and suffered by Him ; in order that his glory as the only Mediator might be made undeniably evident, and be acknowledged wherever the gospel should be preached.

II. We proceed to examine the petition which our Lord offered for Himself with regard to his Exaltation to glory. ‘And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.’—Here our Lord clearly professes in the most solemn manner that He had ‘glory,’ the attributes or perfections of Deity with God in heaven, in the bosom of the Father, before he came into the world ; yea, before the world was ; ‘in the beginning,’ as St. John expresses it, that is, from eternity : for ‘the Word was with God, and the Word was God.’ He prays that He might be invested with the glory and ma-

jesty which, as the eternal Son of the Father, He had always possessed, before He 'made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.' He prayed, in fact, that He might be exalted, in the mysterious union of Deity and glorified Humanity, to be the Saviour and Sovereign of mankind. And could He have used such language if He had not been the true and eternal Son of God—'God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God?' We own the mystery which the case involves, and its incomprehensibility as such. But instead of referring to those who pervert the plain language of Scripture, and who would deprive our Saviour of his glory, which is here so unequivocally asserted, we would call you to contemplate Him with humble minds, and with believing and joyful hearts. He, 'being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:' but, according to the gracious counsel of the Father respecting the redemption of fallen man, He 'took on him the seed of Abraham:' and as 'the Word made flesh,' as 'Emmanuel, God with us,' as God in human nature, He fully accomplished the redeeming work which He had undertaken. When that work was near its completion, He looked up to his Father, and prayed that He might be advanced, as Mediator, God and Man in one person, to his original and eternal glory. Behold Him in the past eternity,—and He was with God, and was God. Behold Him in his incarnate state upon earth,—'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and

we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.' Behold Him now on the throne above, exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high. 'We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.' This is the Saviour whom we preach to you, and in whom we exhort you to put all your trust and confidence, as 'the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;' the only foundation of a true hope. Ask not, How can these things be? They are so: and our assertion rests on the express declarations of God's word. It hath pleased Him to reveal these things to us: and our common reason bids us to be humble and teachable in the school of divine wisdom, and not to be offended because we find even many and deep mysteries which our faculties, in the present state, do not enable us to comprehend. Inconsiderate and presumptuous mortals may cavil, to their confusion and ruin: but the humble believer will acknowledge the Deity of Christ, and trust in Him, and adore, and rejoice.

Having thus briefly unfolded in some measure the prayer which our blessed Saviour offered for Himself, with an immediate reference to the glory of his Father and to the salvation of men, we conclude with a few practical observations.

1. Prayer is a duty at all times; and seasons of especial trial are seasons for especial prayer. As to the general, and as to the particular case, our Lord is our Example. We are informed in the

Gospels how He sought retirement for the purpose of devotion : and the chapter which we are considering, and his conduct in the garden of Gethsemane, inform us how He acted on trying occasions. —‘Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.’ The performance of this duty cannot be neglected without the greatest injury to our souls. To live without prayer is to live without God : and the neglect of prayer is the suspension of that intercourse between God and the soul on which its life, health, and prosperity depend : for prayer is, to speak so, the channel by which we derive all blessings from above. While faith puts the soul in a right frame, it is Prayer that goes forth as a messenger to tell our wants and woes, and to bring us all needful supplies from the treasures of mercy and grace. But seasons of peculiar trial may occur, or rather will occur : and to what shall we then resort for support and relief, but to humble, believing, and fervent prayer ? The arrival of many painful hours may be expected in such a world as this : or if we know but comparatively few of these, yet the shades of death will at length gather around us ; our mortal tabernacle shall be dissolved ; and we shall feel what the dying feel. In all the vicissitudes of life, and when we come to the close of our existence upon earth, let us remember our blessed Saviour, and follow his example : let us remember that God is the Supporter and Comforter of his people, and that He is to be approached with earnest supplication through the only Mediator. To do this is alike our duty and

privilege: and it is thus that we shall obtain strength, consolation, and peace. Happy is he who prays always. Happy is he who in days of trial and anguish approaches a reconciled Father, and pours out his heart before Him. And again,

2. Humble, believing, and fervent prayer is effectual. Did our Lord pray in vain? Hear the words of an Apostle: 'Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him, and was heard in that he feared.' He prayed, He was heard, and his requests were granted. He was supported even in his sharpest sufferings, and a peculiar glory shone forth through the dark cloud of tribulation in which for a season He was involved. But his heavenly Father, who heard and answered Him, will also, for his sake, hear and answer the supplications of his true followers. Real prayer is never fruitless: for our Lord has assured us, 'What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.' At all times, and particularly in affliction, let us make known our requests unto God; and, patiently waiting on Him, we shall find, in our own happy experience, that He hears and answers prayer. And further,

3. It is important not only that we pray, but that we pray aright. The spirit and manner in which our Lord prayed here in the presence of his disciples, deserves very careful consideration. In this intercessory prayer there is no unmeaning re-

dundancy of language; no vehement ardour; no vain repetition: all bespeaks deliberation, dignity, composure, and deep reflection. His feelings were alive and tender, but they were kept in due control, and every expression which He uttered is marked with unquestionable solidity. Let us learn of Him not only to pray, but also how to pray. Let us in all our devotions, after his example, not only be earnest and fervent, but also wise, calm, and collected. Let us think of God,—how great and Holy He is; of ourselves,—what sinful and ignorant creatures we are. Let us, especially, look well to our hearts, and be careful that our language expresses the thoughts and feelings of beings solemnised by a deep sense of the divine presence, and not the hasty and crude effusion that is prompted by excited feelings. In the near view of the cross, our Lord prayed with the thought, calmness, and propriety which He would have exhibited at any other period of his life. We by no means wish to banish all exercise of the affections from prayer: but, with the example of our Lord before us, we would suggest, that prayer is most what prayer ought to be, and, we presume, most truly and largely beneficial to the soul, when we are most attentive to our thoughts and desires, to spirituality and sincerity; and when we do not judge of prayer, as we are perhaps too apt to do, by sensible excitement and fluency of speech. Again,

4. The great truths which are set before us in the text demand our careful remembrance and

serious meditation. We are here taught, that the Father and the Son are glorified; that Christ has universal authority; that eternal life is his gift; that the true knowledge of God and of Christ is essential to our everlasting blessedness; that Christ has finished his redeeming work; and that He is now glorified with the Father, in order that, by his intercession and the gift of his Spirit, his redeeming work may be effectual to the salvation of all them that obey Him. These are the truths to which our attention is here directed. The true light shines around us: and if we continue ignorant of the things that belong to our peace, our ignorance is voluntary and wilful, and, as such, highly criminal. Jehovah is revealed to us: the way of life is clearly set before us. We see what 'many prophets and righteous men desired to see, and have not seen.' Let us duly consider our privileges, and tremble to abuse them: for reason and conscience compel us to admit, that our condemnation must be heavy if we despise the riches of redeeming love and mercy. And lastly,

5. The great work of man upon earth is to seek the knowledge of God and of his Son Jesus Christ, and to live according to it, that he may obtain the gift of eternal life. God is revealed to us,—and shall we not acknowledge his glory? Christ is revealed to us,—and shall we not acknowledge his glory? Shall not our acknowledgment of their glory be heartfelt and practical, so that the frame of our souls and the conduct of life shall be such as become those by whom the divine perfections

are known? Of what service is the gospel to us, if such be not the influence which it has upon us? Are we living as Christians, and are we rightly preparing for the eternal world, unless we are seeking this influence, and always seeking more abundant measures of it? To little purpose, indeed, do we possess the words of eternal life, and make a sort of Christian profession, unless we obtain that true knowledge of the gospel that makes us humble, holy, and obedient, living to the glory of Him whose glory is revealed to us. If we be wise, we shall be on our guard against error and delusion, presumption and formality; and it will be our daily prayer, as long as we are upon earth, that we may know God in Christ Jesus, and so live in heart and practice to his honour and glory, that we may finally be with our glorified and ever-living Head. This, indeed, is to live; for it is happiness and honour: but all else is folly, shame, and ruin.

SERMON XXVI.

The Prayer of our Lord for his Disciples.

ST. JOHN, xvii. 6—19.

I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them; because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they might be sanctified through the truth.

THESE verses relate, in the first place, to the disciples only; and their most obvious application, in

the second place, is to the Ministers of God's word: but this being kept in view, we shall find no difficulty in deducing from them those truths which are of universal concern and interest. There were distinct and peculiar things in the Apostolical, and there are such in the Ministerial, Office and Character: and these things being duly considered, every true believer may study this part of our blessed Saviour's intercessory prayer with large benefit to himself. He viewed his disciples with regard to their special designation as his future Ambassadors; and with regard to their privileges, trials, dangers, and duties; and the substance of his prayer for them is, that they might be enabled to act in agreement with their office, maintain a right spirit, be preserved among all evils, and finally attain eternal happiness. Our limits compel us to offer merely a few remarks on the chief topics which it contains, which may make the study of it more easy, delightful, and profitable to the serious Christian.

I. Let us consider the Character of the disciples, as it may be collected from these verses. In the sixth verse our Lord speaks of them as 'the men which thou gavest me out of the world,' or from among the Jewish nation: and He adds respecting them, 'thine they were,' the creatures of thy hand, 'and thou gavest them me,' that they should be mine for an especial purpose,—the witnesses of my life, doctrine, and miracles, and the heralds of my gospel in all lands.—We observe that,

1. They were favoured with a peculiar mani-

festation of God. 'I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world.' This is explained by the eighth verse: 'For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me;' that is, I have communicated thy doctrine to them. God is but partially known by the works of creation: He was but dimly revealed to the Jews: it belonged to Jesus to make a full revelation of Him in the gospel. The minds of the disciples were enlightened, though their views were yet imperfect: they had been instructed in the word of truth; in the 'name' or perfections of God; in the doctrines which our Lord came to promulge: and this partial illumination was to be perfected by the Comforter, or Paraclete.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the revealer of God and of his will: and we may exclaim, How luminous and gracious are his discoveries; and how effectual are the instructions of the Holy Spirit in the souls of true believers! Neither teacher nor hearer can know God rightly, but through the manifestation of Him which is made by the word and Spirit of Jesus: and that manifestation of Him is essential to our being true Christians.

2. They properly regarded the manifestation granted to them: 'They have kept thy word.' They diligently observed it, carefully obeyed it, and faithfully adhered to it. As far as they knew the truth, they were its firm advocates.—Ministers are to keep the divine word,—to study it, draw their instructions from it, and in all respects to be governed by it: and their hearers also are to keep

it, to attend to it diligently, and to form their faith and practice by it ; or they are no true disciples of Christ. The manifestation of truth to the soul, or of God in the light of truth, is the foundation of the Christian character ; and the careful observance of the truth is essential to its prosperity.

3. They were persuaded that the doctrines taught by our Lord were from God. ‘ Now they have known that all things,’ all doctrines, ‘ whatsoever thou hast given me, are from thee.’ Our Saviour wrought wonderful miracles, taught sublime doctrines and holy precepts, and exhibited in himself a perfectly pure and benevolent spirit : and the disciples were convinced, that He was from above, and that his words and works were the words and works of God.—Whether we be ministers or hearers, we ought to be fully satisfied that Christ is the Son of God, and that the doctrines which He taught are the merciful counsels of God respecting our perishing race. The gospel is no ‘ cunningly devised fable,’ but ‘ the wisdom from above.’ Let us at all times be fully persuaded, that the mind of Christ is the mind of God ; and, therefore, that we are following and led by the true light, when the gospel is our instructor.

4. They were believers in Christ, having received his doctrines, and acknowledging Him to be the Messiah. ‘ For I have given unto them the words,’ or doctrines, ‘ which thou gavest me : and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.’ Their knowledge was

not mere speculation; it was accompanied with faith: they saw in our Lord one who in a high and peculiar sense 'came out from God:' as far as they were instructed in his words, they 'received them' as the true light.—It is thus that we are to think rightly of our blessed Lord, and to receive his words into our minds and hearts. We must renounce our errors, and receive the truth as it is in Jesus: and we must receive it not as a speculation for our minds, but as the light and life of our souls. We receive the words of Christ when we embrace them, to the exclusion of our own vain opinions: and we receive Christ when, with an entire renunciation of ourselves, we trust in Him as our only and entire Saviour: and in this we see a living and true faith.

5. They were separate from their unbelieving countrymen. 'They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.' In no respect was our Lord 'of the world,' as to its moral state or character: no guilt, or stain, or folly, or error attached to Him: He was 'holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.' His disciples, as far as they received his doctrine, and imbibed his spirit, and obeyed his commands, were not 'of the world,'—were not such as their unbelieving countrymen were.—And here every true Christian may be reminded of the high and holy ground upon which he stands, and of the peculiar character which he has to sustain. Spiritually enlightened in the truth, renouncing the pomp and pleasure of the world, and having his delight and satisfaction in spiritual

things, it is alike his duty, interest, and honour to live more and more in conformity with the word of God. By the mercy and grace which he has received, he is separate; and by the improvement of that mercy and grace he is to keep himself separate, from the world. The faithful servants of Christ and the men of the world form two distinct bodies; divided from each other, amid all their natural and social affinities, by their views, principles, affections, aims, and proceedings. This idea may be unpleasant to some persons: but the fact is indisputable: as Christ, in his spirit and conduct, was not of the world, so his true followers are not of the world in their spirit and conduct.

6. They were disliked by their countrymen. 'I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.' We may readily conceive, that the Jews, so hostile to our Lord, would manifest a strong aversion towards his followers: and such was the case.—And all Christians may here learn what they are to expect from those who make light of religion. They ought, indeed, to be wise and prudent, circumspect in conduct, and kind and benevolent in disposition: but they must be true and faithful to God's word, and to their own character as Christ's followers. But there is, as we have just said, such a complete and essential spiritual difference between them and the world, that there can be no coalition between the two parties; no mixing of them into one mass. There is a strong repelling power between the elements which form

the basis of their characters. Let there be honesty and fidelity, and there must be separation ; and this will bring upon the friends of truth the world's dislike and hatred. The evidence of the fact is meeting us wherever we look. In proportion as the dissimilarity between Christ's followers and the world's bond-slaves is seen and felt, the more fully will the hostility mentioned in the text be exhibited. Nothing can secure to the real Christian the world's love and commendation but concealment, cowardice, compliance, and a guilty compromise, entirely inconsistent with the integrity of the true Christian character.

Such is the description which our Lord gave of his disciples, viewing them perhaps with some degree of anticipation of what they would be when the Holy Spirit had descended upon them.

II. We proceed to consider the peculiar Office of the disciples. ' I pray for them ; I pray not,' in these petitions, ' for the world,' the unbelieving Jews, ' but,' particularly, ' for them,' these my disciples, ' which thou hast given me' for an especial purpose : ' for they are thine,' thy creatures, servants, and worshippers : ' And all mine are thine, and thine are mine ; and I am glorified in them.' These men are thy servants and mine, the teachers of thy doctrine and mine ; and my glory, my perfections, as Mediator, will be made known by them to all mankind. ' As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.'

With regard to the peculiar office of the disciples, we observe,

1. That they were sent by our Lord into the world. He had been sent into it by the Father, that by his life, doctrines, and atoning sacrifice He might, to speak so, lay the foundation of the Christian Church. In like manner He sent forth the disciples to publish to men the glad tidings of salvation,—to build up the Church on the foundation which He had laid. He gave them their qualification; ‘And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:’ and He also gave them their commission and authority; ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.’ Thus qualified and commissioned, they were sent forth, ‘Ambassadors for Christ,’ into all lands.

Who, we may ask, are the true ministers of Christ? and we answer, Neither those who go forth of their own will without a lawful commission, nor those who go forth of their own will with a lawful commission, but without spiritual qualification. The former are not invested with authority; and the latter engage in a work of which they do not understand the nature. We wish to see the orderly external designation, according to the laws of Christ’s Church; and also those spiritual endowments by which the soul receives, understands, and is able to unfold the mercy and grace of the gospel: for in these combined we see those things which constitute the true minister of Christ. Other things may be desirable; but these are essential: and if

we have both the proper qualification and commission, we may encourage our hearts with the persuasion, that as Christ was sent by the Father to work out our redemption, we are also sent forth by Christ to publish that redemption to our fellow creatures.—But we further observe,

2. That the disciples were separated from the world to preach and maintain the truth. ‘And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.’ Christ ‘sanctified’ himself,—consecrated himself to the service of his Father, by setting himself apart, and by offering himself an atoning sacrifice for sin; and, further, by undertaking the office of an ambassador, and unfolding to men the doctrine of salvation. His words, therefore, may amount to this,—I have consecrated myself to thy service, in order that these my disciples might be consecrated to it, and be the teachers of the truth after my departure from the world. As our blessed Lord was set apart and consecrated to his office, so did He set apart and consecrate the disciples to their office.

How great were the love and condescension of our Lord in consecrating Himself to be our Prophet and High Priest! And we also magnify his wisdom and goodness in appointing Apostles, and afterwards ministers by them, and in succession after them, to publish the everlasting Gospel to all nations and through all generations. His faithful ministers are not only ‘sanctified by the truth,’ or made holy by its renewing and purifying efficacy, but they are also consecrated, or set apart, to make

known to a perishing world that 'faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' Christ himself is the wisdom of God; for in Him 'are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge:' and by his gracious appointment 'we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.'

3. And we remark, again, that the disciples were to promote the glory of Christ. 'And I am glorified in them:' that is, I shall be glorified by their labours: for my character, my perfections, the redemption which I have wrought out, and the various offices which I sustain, shall be made known to the world by their successful propagation of the truth, and shall be acknowledged by multitudes of true believers.—After our Lord had ascended to glory, the great work of asserting his dignity and unfolding his doctrines devolved on the disciples. Their labours were effectual, through the agency of the promised Spirit, to the conversion of many in all lands. Thus was our blessed Saviour 'glorified.' He 'saw of the travail of his soul:' for his Name was honoured and celebrated, as the only saving Name, in the grateful praises of countless numbers of every condition in every clime.

But, in like manner, to promote the glory of Christ, in bringing immortal souls through divine grace to the true acknowledgment of Him, is the one great object of every faithful minister. Every thing else, in comparison with this, is to be regarded by him as being of very inferior moment, or rather

of no moment at all. If Christ be glorified, if souls be brought to the acknowledgment of Him ; if believers glorify Him by their faith and practice ; if, in a word, he see the gospel prove to be to those around him, the message of mercy and grace, of life and health, of holiness and peace ; he feels the highest satisfaction, and his heart is filled with gratitude and joy.

But as ministers are to glorify Christ by the preaching of his gospel, so are their hearers to glorify Him by the full reception and faithful improvement of the gospel. Ministers unfold in vain the Redeemer's glory, and explain the nature of his kingdom, unless those who hear them seek divine influence, behold the glory of Christ, receive Him, trust in Him, and keep his commandments. If, indeed, they do this, the gospel is to them 'the savour of life unto life : ' but if this, from any cause, be neglected, it is 'the savour of death unto death.'

III. We now examine the Petitions which our Lord offered to his Father on behalf of the disciples.

1. He prays that they may be preserved in the faith of the gospel, and in such unity as to form one body. 'And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are.' While our Lord was upon earth, He kept the disciples faithful in the cause of truth ; Judas only, 'the son of perdition,' proved perfidious ; and in him the ancient prophecies were fulfilled : but

now that He was about to leave the world, and knowing the weakness of man and the evils to which his disciples would be exposed, He prays that they may be preserved by almighty power, not only in adherence to the truth, but also in concord with each other. As the Father and the Son are one in will and counsel, our Lord prays that, in like manner, the disciples may be one in counsel, feeling, and conduct.—Here we see the unity and concord which ought to prevail among the ministers of Christ. They are servants of the same Master, partakers of the same Spirit, preachers of the same gospel, labouring for the same object, and hoping to obtain the same eternal mansions. Whether we consider the evils produced by discord, or the blessings and advantages connected with love and unanimity, we shall see how truly desirable it is that the ministers of Christ should be one harmonious body. But, not to expatiate here on this subject, the fact that the object which our Lord had in view in his first petition for the disciples was, that they might be one as the Father and He were one, speaks more strongly on the matter than any thing could which man can advance. It must be obvious to every reflecting mind, that our Lord duly estimated the baneful effects of discord and division, and the salutary influence of love and unity. If this had been practically remembered in the Church through all past ages, surely men would have abstained from those perplexing speculations, unprofitable questions, wrathful controversies, and rash judgments, which have broken the Church into al-

most innumerable parts, by which the triumphs of truth have been so materially obstructed. Men, however, are yet far from having learned where wisdom lies; and debate, strife, and division unhappily prevail among us, through the bad might of folly, prejudice, and passion. All that we can say, unfeignedly deploring the evil which we behold, is this,—the Gospel is the word of love and peace, and the Holy Spirit is the inspirer of love and peace: and love and peace will be always cultivated by those who really enter into the nature of the gospel, and who are governed by the almighty Sanctifier. Unity,—the whole Christian fold being one, and all its pastors being one,—is a delightful theme for our meditation: but when we think, that, through the arts of Satan and the corruption of man, no such unity exists, we can only lament that so little regard is given to our Lord's petition, and endeavour to direct the attention of some at least to it. We will not, however, banish the thought of unity from our breasts, as though it were only a lovely dream: for unity will be now carefully cultivated by the wise; and the more faithfully they attend to it, the more effectually do they labour to hasten the arrival of that day when light, and love, and concord shall be the glory, beauty, and happiness of the whole world.

2. He prays that they may be kept from evil; from the evil one, and from the evil world. 'I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.' They were in the world, and were to continue

in it for a season, discharging the weightiest duties, and exposed to many dangers and trials. Our Lord does not pray that they might be exempted from labour, or that their days might be shortened, but that they might be upheld in the way of duty, uninjured by the arts of Satan or the malice of his agents, and maintaining their Christian integrity in all circumstances. And here we see how all Christians ought to pray for themselves and others. While we are in the world, we are exposed to dangers and temptations, trials and sufferings : but let us not fear, or repine, or be impatient. Knowing what human life is, how it stands related to an eternal state, and what a glorious prospect lies before us, the true Christian part is to be courageous, meek, and enduring : it is to bear the burden and heat of the day with fortitude, composure, and resignation. Nor ought we, in our selfishness, to desire for ourselves that seclusion from the world which is a sort of premature death. We are to live here to promote the glory of God, not as solitary but as social beings ; and this implies the willing and faithful discharge of all those duties which we owe to our fellow creatures. But in this public and active life, it becomes us to pray that we may be kept from the evil that abounds in the world ; from the devices of our great Adversary,—the corruptions of the flesh,—the pomps and vanity of the world,—the maxims, manners, and examples of the unthinking multitude. Leaving our term of days, and also our temporal condition, with truly resigned minds, to unerring wisdom, let it be our first desire

to obtain the divine grace, that we may be preserved from evil, and that our conversation may be such as becomes the gospel.

And here we would speak especially to the affectionate parent. He looks upon his children with the tenderest regard, as he contemplates their future lot in life, or when he is obliged to dismiss them from the shelter of the parental roof. We call upon him to remember the petition of our Lord for his disciples, and to adopt it as that which he offers up to the Father of mercies in the name of Jesus on behalf of his beloved offspring:—‘I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.’

3. He prays that they might be sanctified: ‘Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.’ If the word ‘sanctify’ be understood in its common acceptation, our Lord prays that the disciples might be purified more and more by the power of divine truth. Sanctification is progressive; and the word of God, which is The Truth, is the outward instrument by which, according to the agency of the Holy Spirit, it is carried on in the soul. All Christians ought to pray daily for an ever-increasing experience of this inestimable, this essential blessing.—But if we understand by the word official designation, the petition of our Lord will amount to this,—‘I pray that my disciples, separated for a particular office, may remain consecrated to thee, and, by thy grace, maintain their character in the world as the preachers of the

Truth.'—Both meanings may well be united. The gospel is the Truth, and so far as we really receive it, we are made holy by it, and are consecrated to God as his servants. But if we be holy, we are not perfect in holiness, but need to pray continually that, through the truth and the agency of the Spirit, we may advance in holiness—more pure in heart, and more upright in conduct. And while the Minister of the truth has the greatest need, weak and sinful as he is in himself, and exposed to many dangers, to pray that he may be faithful to his character as Christ's ambassador, every private Christian has equal need to pray that he may be kept firm and steadfast in the faith and in the way of righteousness, as one who has vowed all true allegiance to his God and Saviour.

Such, then, were the petitions of our Lord for his immediate followers: but one verse, the 13th, remains unnoticed: it states the design of our Lord's intercession for them. 'And now I come to thee: and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.' It is as though He had said;—'My visible personal presence will no longer be the joy of my disciples, for my removal from them is at hand, and they are to go forth into the world in the discharge of their duty: I, therefore, offer these petitions for them while I am with them, in order that they may have the highest joy; being assured that I am exalted to glory, that I commend them to thee, that they shall successfully preach the gospel, and that they shall finally be raised to the inheritance of eternal

blessedness.' It was the desire of our Lord, that they should be steadfast in the truth, maintain his cause among men, be united in love, and have a pure and abundant joy in themselves—a joy derived from Him.

Whether we regard the minister or the private Christian, true piety is connected with holy joy; and, notwithstanding the many causes of sorrow that exist, it is the duty of each to cultivate and maintain, as much as possible, a calm and happy frame of spirit. Unless they do this, how can they rightly perform their duties, or adorn the doctrine which they profess?—Our Lord rejoices in and over his people; and He would have them to experience that joy for which He has made an ample provision. The minister, it is true, may feel sadness and utter complaint, while he beholds an ungodly world: and both he and the private Christian may feel and speak in like manner on account of various things respecting themselves and their families. But whether we be public or private characters, we ought to remember that we are the servants and the subjects of Christ, in his world,—the world which He has made and redeemed, and which He governs,—and maturing here, under his care and influence, for a perfect state. Our proper business, therefore, is to believe, to obey, to resign, to rejoice,—alive to the blessings of which we are every moment recipients.

We have now considered our Lord's petitions for his disciples; and if we refer to the Acts of the Apostles, and to the history of the primitive Church,

we shall find abundant proof that his petitions were answered. They were enabled to sustain their character as Apostles, and to triumph, in their ministration of the gospel, over the pride of pagan philosophy and the abominations of pagan manners. In a word, (for we hasten to conclude,) they were preserved, and made the wise, and holy, and unanimous, and persevering advocates of the Truth, to the glory of our blessed Redeemer, and to the benefit of the world.

The serious Minister will always study this portion of Scripture with large benefit to himself, while he sees here his character, circumstances, qualifications, duties, and resources, and applies the whole to himself with the utmost fidelity. Here he will learn what he ought to be in an evil world: and these petitions of our Lord will teach him what to pray for on his own behalf, in order that he may make full proof of his ministry, and so persevere in his course as to finish it with joy. And the private Christian also will here learn many valuable lessons; how he must have the knowledge of God, and faith in Christ; how he must receive and obey the divine word, and be separate from the world, and glorify Christ by a holy and consistent conversation among men. Here too all true Christians may be reminded of their constant need of the communication to them of divine grace, that they may be a harmonious body, rejoicing in their ever-living Head, preserved from sin and Satan, and enabled to persevere in the way of righteousness all their days.

We cannot examine this portion of holy writ, without seeing how lamentably we fall short of being what we ought to be. How scanty our knowledge, and how weak our faith! How little do we glorify Christ! How partial is our separation from the world! How cold is our love of each other! Unity can scarcely be said to exist: and how defectively do we show that we are sanctified by the truth, and devoted to our God and Saviour! We may well look with sorrow and anguish on the unthinking world: and with what feelings shall we look on those who attend in some sort to the gospel?—But our concern is with ourselves; and while we are thankful for the mercy and grace of God in Christ Jesus, (if we be really partakers of that mercy and grace,) let the discovery of our manifold deficiency urge us to greater diligence and faithfulness henceforward, in ‘working out our salvation with fear and trembling.’ In this manner shall we live as the true disciples of Christ, exhibiting in our lives the excellence, and enjoying in our own souls the consolation, of the everlasting Gospel.


SERMON XXVII.

The Prayer of our Lord for his Church.

ST. JOHN, xvii. 20—26.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee: and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.'

SUCH is the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ for his Church. Reference seems to be made to the disciples in the concluding verses: but since our Lord says in the twentieth verse, that He prayed for those which should believe on Him through the preaching of the gospel, and there is no change of persons in this series of petitions, there seems to



be sufficient ground for giving to them a general application. We find in these verses, in a striking manner, a full exemplification of that peculiarity which we formerly noticed,—a union of the purest simplicity of language with the noblest sublimity of thought. The words are plain, but the thoughts are far beyond our full comprehension. The very existence, however, of such a passage in the gospels is a proof, that we are not always to walk on a low ground, or in a beaten path, but are, at proper seasons, to unfold, and try, and exercise our powers amid the elevation and grandeur of religion, provided we do it with humility and with a proper design. In the higher departments of sacred truth, we soon come to the barriers beyond which we cannot pass: but the highest truths of the gospel, when studied with devout feelings, will never fail to enlarge our minds, animate our hearts, and strengthen our principles: for they lead us to form and entertain lofty conceptions, (and no other are just,) both of the present and of the future state.—But we can indulge ourselves no farther in these general remarks.

I. We consider the Persons for whom our blessed Saviour prays. ‘Neither pray I for these,’ the disciples, ‘alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;’ for all believers. Again, ‘O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee; and these have known that thou hast sent me.’ If reference is here made to the disciples, as distinguished from the unbelieving Jews, yet we see no reason why all

true believers should not be comprehended within its meaning.—Here, then, we see the character of Christ's Church; a people as distinct from the world as the disciples were from the rest of the Jews. Those who are termed 'the world' do not know God, since they close their eyes against the light of the gospel. 'The world hath not known thee,' is the language of our Lord: and is it not as applicable to myriads among us as it was to those of whom it was directly spoken? But the true disciples of Christ know God—know Him spiritually and effectually. By what means? By rightly acknowledging the person and the mission of Christ. 'These have known that thou hast sent me.' The disciples had lately declared, 'By this we believe that thou camest forth from God.' Our Lord's words, however, are applicable to all true Christians. They regard Him as the sent of God, as He that should come, as the Messiah. They have elevated views of his person and redeeming work: and knowing Him, they know God. 'I have known thee'—says our Lord. He knew the perfections and will of his Father, and revealed them to mankind. True believers, fully persuaded of his divine mission, and receiving the gospel, know God as He is in Christ—as He is discovered in the gospel of Christ. Enlightened by the word and by the Spirit of truth, they possess a true faith. 'Them, also,' says our Lord, 'which shall believe on me through their word.' 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' The gospel, preached by the voice of man, is mighty and vital, when ac-

accompanied with a divine power, to change both the state and nature of man. And what is the happy case of those who hear and believe? 'As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' Faith is the great Christian principle; and this is wrought in the soul, as to inward or spiritual agency, by the Holy Ghost, and, as to outward or visible instrumentality, by the gospel and its holy ordinances. The faith of true believers is not a mere feeling, fancy, or presumption, but a persuasion of the truth of Scripture, together with the acting of the whole soul in agreement with that persuasion. This frame of soul, and this acting of the soul, has the inspired word for its basis, and the Holy Ghost for its author. It may be viewed as consisting in the conformity of the soul in all its operations to the Truth as it is in Jesus.—Such are true believers. They have heard and received the words of eternal life; they believe on Christ; they know God—not speculatively, coldly, and professionally, but spiritually, vitally, and savingly.

II. We now consider the Declarations which our Lord advances with regard to true believers;—the peculiar blessings which they enjoy.

1. He declares that He had given peculiar glory to his people. 'And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them.' Viewing these words in reference to the disciples, they express the communication of every thing to them, by the instructions

and commission of our Lord, and by the gift and operations of the Holy Spirit, which qualified them for their labours as Apostles. But we need not confine ourselves to this view of them. Our blessed Saviour has the glory of Sonship by generation, as begotten of God; by commission, as sent by Him; by the resurrection, as the first-born from the dead; by actual possession, as heir of all things. His glory, then, is partly incommunicable, partly communicable; and that which is communicable He has given to his people. They are the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty; and as such they are 'heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ,' and will be 'glorified together' with Him. The glory, then, which they have is,—adoption into the family of God here, with all the grace and privileges connected with that high and endearing relation,—and a blessed immortality hereafter. Thus by virtue of his mediation and intercession, and by the operations of his Spirit, our Saviour communicates to his people, as far as the case admits, the glory which He possesses. Through Him we have the title of sons, and the rights of Sonship, and are the objects of the Father's love. Christ is in glory: but He confers glory upon us, is preparing glory for us, and will at length receive us to his glory.—We see, then, the honour and blessedness of true believers;—honour the most splendid, and blessedness the most pure: for even now, amid the imperfections of the present state, they are near to God, and are acquiring a likeness

to Him ; and they shall be near to Him and with Him for ever.

2. Our Lord declares that He had given, and would further give, a peculiar manifestation of the Father to his people. ‘And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it.’ He had given to his disciples some knowledge of God, and He afterwards increased their knowledge of Him ; for after his resurrection they were instructed by Him in divine subjects, and had their minds fully enlightened afterwards in the gospel by the Holy Spirit.—But we may observe, that all true Christians have been, and are, and shall be instructed in the gracious counsels of God. How does the great Head of the Church fulfil his words ? By giving us the Scriptures, and the public ministry of the word, and divine ordinances ; and also by giving us, through his Spirit, illumination and spiritual understanding. It is thus that humble, believing, and devout souls have the saving knowledge of God. At first their knowledge may be scanty, a mere dawning light ; and in this part of their course they see but dimly, and comparatively little. But the light becomes gradually more abundant, and they see things as children of the light and of the day. But there is always such an immensity in Truth, and so much imperfection, in various respects, in their views, that a real progress in piety is through life a real progress in knowledge.

But our Lord assigns a reason for his revealing the Father to his people. ‘That the love where-

with thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.' He himself was the beloved Son, in whom the Father was well pleased. And what had He in view when He now contemplated his believing people? That the same love of his Father which rested upon Him might also rest upon them,—that they might be dear to God, as He himself was. Shall we, sinful dust and ashes, share that love of the Father which He has for the holy Jesus? This is the delightful idea which is here set before us. There is, indeed, in the language of our Lord a glory and a beauty which we cannot adequately conceive. God is revealed to us, and Christ is revealed to us; and for this purpose, that the love of God, as a heavenly sunshine, may rest upon us, and that Christ himself may dwell in us: for believing in Him with the heart, we are in a state of reconciliation with God, and the mild radiation of his paternal love is upon us, and the purified heart is the abode of Christ, being the temple of the Holy Ghost. High and holy this is, and that in the highest degree. Redemption is a means; and one of its great objects is, the union of God and man: and this union involves the love of the Father and the indwelling of Christ. If our spiritual apprehension of this be dim, yet we ought not to banish it from our minds, but rather to meditate upon it, and to seek the right knowledge of it. No speculative accuracy of view will enable us to enter into this subject: it can be known only by 'growing up in Christ in all things;' by obtaining more, and still more, of that inward sight, feeling, and taste

which are given to those who are taught and purified by the almighty Sanctifier.

III. We proceed to consider the Petitions of our Lord for his Church.

1. He prays that believers might live in unity. 'That they all may be one.' 'That they may be one, even as we are one.' The Father and the Son are one essentially; but they are also one in mutual love, and in counsel, will, or purpose: to the latter, we conceive, our Lord here refers.—All true Christians ought to be of one heart and mind. Christ's Church is one body; and it ought, as such, to be without discord. As to our bodily frame, 'the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you:' and as there is no strife, no division, between the members that compose the animal frame, so there ought to be no strife and division among Christians, viewed as the Church or body of Christ. Favoured with the light of God's word, they ought to walk in that light, coveting 'earnestly the best gifts,' and especially attentive to 'the more excellent way,'—the way of Charity or love, the parent of unanimity and concord. The Church above, with its various orders, is one; and the Church below, with its various orders, ought to be one; so that it might be said, as formerly, 'The multitude of them that believe are of one heart, and of one mind.'

Discord and strife and division are the natural productions of man's wayward heart. We are proud and self-willed, capricious and impatient of

restraint, and over-weeningly fond of our own opinions. Hence arise feuds, dissensions, and schisms: and hence the Church has in all ages been broken into parties opposed to each other, and in many cases with feelings of direst animosity. Thus, unhappily, has the petition of our Lord been disregarded.—But his faithful disciples will meditate on his words—‘that they all may be one;’ and they will strongly feel, that, as division is an evil work proceeding from the prince of evil, unity, or the maintenance of it, is a good work proceeding from the Source of all goodness. If, indeed, mindful of our obligations, we desire to live in the spirit of the gospel, and by its rules, we shall strive to be such in our language, conduct, and secret feelings, as always to endeavour to keep ‘the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.’ We shall look upon ourselves as members of one sacred brotherhood; and labour to maintain and exhibit among men something of that blessed unity which prevails in the world above. How could our Lord give us a more sublime idea of Christian unity and concord, —or one more fitted to show us its excellence and importance,—than that which is conveyed to us in his emphatical words—‘That they may be one, as we are one!’ Happy is he who, in a restless and jarring world, meditates often on the august and delightful petition of our Saviour; who imbibes the spirit which it breathes, and, triumphing over his own perverseness and that of others, regulates his heart and practice in agreement with it! He will adorn the Church militant here on earth by his af-

fectionate spirit and orderly conduct, and he will be continually preparing to join the Church triumphant in heaven, where wrath and hate, where discord and division will never enter.

2. Our Lord prays that believers might have a peculiar unity with the Father and with himself. 'As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us.' 'I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.' Of truths of this high order, our conceptions are necessarily inadequate: but let us meditate upon them with delight, and with solemnity of thought and feeling. Could we pass through the veil of interposing matter, and behold the spiritual world with spiritual vision, we should see above us the glorious Jehovah, Father, Son, and Spirit, and the heavenly hosts; and we should see around us, on the surface of this earth, myriads of sanctified spirits—the faithful followers of our blessed Saviour. Then we should learn, as we cannot now learn, that, as there is an essential and ineffable union between the Father and the Son, by which they are mutually in each other, so there is also an ineffable and moral union, by the agency of the mighty Renovator, between the Son and his mystical body the Church. Thus there is an exalted and endearing union and intimacy between the Father and his redeemed creatures, both parties meeting in Christ the Mediator. Heaven and earth, if we may speak so, meet in Him: and in this meeting, union, and intimacy, we see the true unity of the universe,—the real harmony of intelligent exist-

ences: for there is a high and real sense in which the Father, the Son, and the sanctified spirits of men are one: and the clear contemplation of this unity, and the full enjoyment of the bliss resulting from it, constitute the perfection of that state of light and purity which forms the present hope of all true believers. Feeble as we are, and dim as our vision is, we are able to form an elevated, and even transporting, view of the relation in which the Church stands to the glorious Jehovah, and to feel the strong obligations under which we are, collectively and individually, to cultivate a spirit, and to maintain a line of conduct, that comport with such a relation.


There is, indeed, a wide difference between the essential union that exists among the persons of the Godhead and that union which subsists between them and true believers. Our union with them does not unite substances: it is only of a spiritual and moral nature; but, with the language of our Lord before us, we must assert it to be a most exalted, intimate, and indissoluble union. This idea, or rather fact, if we could pursue and expand it, would give us a most astonishing view of redemption, and a most solemn and delightful view of the state and character of every true Christian. The Father is in Christ, and Christ is in the Father: 'As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee:' and true believers are in them: 'That they also may be one in us:' they are united to the Father and the Son by those relations, operations, and principles which advance them to a glorious and blessed

nearness to their Creator and Redeemer—to a moral, but not to a natural or physical, identity with them. Here is the love and condescension of Jehovah; and here is the happiness and exaltation of man. We view the adorable Emmanuel as the centre of the redeeming system: we acknowledge the existence of the Father in Him, and of Him in the Father, and our existence both in Him and in the Father: and then we see that religion is unity, grandeur, love, and happiness. Human philosophy may have its noble thoughts and splendid dreams: but its noblest discoveries are only at the most a bright shade of glory, and its most boasted power is mere inefficiency. But in the gospel we have the sublime reality; for there we see how God descends to man in the person of Christ, and how, in his person and by his Spirit, He raises man to Himself, and receives him into communion with Himself. Here, then, we see the grandeur of our holy faith, and here we may feel the sublimity that belongs to our existence: and, above all, we here see what we ought to seek and cherish with ever-intense desire—that union with the Father and the Son, whence proceeds all that is good and great here, and all that is glorious hereafter.

We linger on the subject; for it is one of the most strengthening and consolatory kind;—enlivening, elevating, purifying, and practical. Here we learn the achievement of the great sacrifice for sin, and of renewing grace. Feeble mortals we are, dwelling in houses of clay, walking on this world's troubled surface, liable to various evils, wants, and

sufferings; but if we receive the gospel, and if Christ be formed in us, we may well forget the darkness of every cloud and the sharpness of every pang, because we have a glory that cannot be tarnished, and a bliss which cannot be affected by the accidents of time. Well too, indeed, may we turn from the allurements and fascinations of the world, and disregard the humiliating circumstances that may belong to our earthly condition, as we contemplate the most sublime and endearing affinities—our relationship to the Skies—the birthright of all the children of God, whatever be their allotments in the present world. But,

3. Our Lord prays that his believing followers may be with Him for ever in glory. ‘Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.’ The word was with God from eternity, the object of his love: and the Word made flesh performed on earth the Father’s will, and was afterwards exalted to peculiar glory as Mediator and Head over all things to his Church. What, then, is the prospect that lies before his faithful people? It is that, when mortality is laid aside, they shall be for ever with Him, and behold his glory. It is pleasant to leave at times the ordinary walk of life, to lay aside the burden and perplexity of secular cares, and to enter within the courts of the Most High, where we hear the discoveries of revelation unfolded and inculcated by the lips of feeble mortals. How incon-



ceivably more delightful will it be, having passed over the wilderness, and having laid aside the burden of the flesh, and being clothed in the garment of salvation, in the robe of righteousness, to enter into the mansions of light, life, and perfect bliss, and to enjoy for ever the vision of uncreated glory! While we think of the future bliss and honour, let us never fail to remember the love of Christ. He died to redeem us; and He lives to pardon us, bless us, sanctify us, and intercede for us. Nor will his work be ineffectual: for 'He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.' He will 'bring many sons to glory,' numbers without number of the human race, of all climes and ages and conditions, who shall rejoice in his presence and celebrate his praise for ever and ever.

IV. We cannot conclude the discourse without a few remarks on the reference which our Lord's prayer on this occasion has to the world at large. The prayer, as we have now seen at some length, was offered by our blessed Saviour for Himself, for the Disciples, and for the Church, (or the Disciples and Church conjointly): these were, manifestly, the immediate objects of his intercessory petitions. It is true, then, that we have here no direct petition on behalf of the world. But although this is the case, we maintain that the best interests of the world were not forgotten by our Lord, but were evidently in his view through the whole of the prayer. What were his own words? 'That the world may believe that thou hast sent me.' 'And that the world may know that thou hast sent me,


and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.' His prayer, therefore, has a clear reference to all mankind, and it virtually comprehends them: for it is as though He had said, 'Let true believers, through thy grace, so live in unity and love, adorn the gospel, enjoy its blessings, and rejoice in the prospects which it unfolds to them, that all men, seeing their excellence and happiness, may consider the truth and glory of my doctrine, acknowledge me to be the only Saviour, and enlist under the banner of my Cross.' While it is true, then, that no direct petition was offered for the world, it is equally true that the world were not disregarded. We see in the prayer a direct and repeated reference to their spiritual benefit. On the highest authority we are informed, that God our Saviour 'will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.' He died for all; offers his redeeming blessings to all, wherever his gospel is known; and, in perfect harmony with this, He emphatically refers in his intercession for the Church to the spiritual good of all.

If we look upon our Lord's words in their practical bearing, we may observe, that the success of the gospel in the world is far from depending entirely on the labours of ministers. It is their office to preach the truth as it is in Jesus: and their labours will not be fruitless; some will be brought to repentance, faith, and obedience. But their labours will produce a comparatively small effect until the glory and excellence of the gospel shine forth in the lives of its disciples. While Christians

are divided, and full of hostility, rivalry, and strife, they cannot put forth a mighty influence. They do not think, feel, speak, and act as one body: and their dissension and consequent division are causes, in various ways, of imbecility. Not only so: they become the subjects of reproach; for it is seen that, whatever be their pretensions, they are not faithful to the gospel, and cherish a spirit which it condemns. And, further, the gospel itself, in consequence of their perverseness, is vilified by some, and disregarded by others. If Christians were of one mind and heart, and adorned their lives with the fruits of righteousness, their excellence would be acknowledged; and they would have an influence which they cannot have as long as their lustre is tarnished, and their spirit corrupted, by so much of human folly and human passion. Love, peace, and unity, therefore, among Christians are not only desirable, but essential, whether we regard the prosperity or the increase of the Church. Hence it is evident, that he who regards his own salvation, the glory of our Redeemer, and the welfare of mankind, will cherish and exhibit them with the utmost care. Those Christians are awfully forgetful of our Lord's intercession and of their own duty, who suffer pride and self-will to prevail in their hearts, and cause division and confusion in the Church. They debase their own piety, if they be pious; and they obstruct, as far as in them lies, that universal diffusion of divine truth which was contemplated by our Lord in his direct references to the world.

But let it not be said, because the Church is painfully divided and lacerated, that no such thing exists as Christian unity. Omitting at present the consolatory fact, that there is an important sense in which all true believers are one, we may recollect that there has been a time when the Church was one; and we may look forward to future ages, when it shall be one again, on a far more extensive scale, and that through the revolution of ages. There is in the gospel a principle which neither hell nor earth can destroy,—a principle of omnipotent and enduring life: and when God shall see fit to bid that spirit put forth its hallowed energies, not only will darkness be dispelled by the abounding light, but prejudice and passion will be vanquished by the prevailing power, and there will be one fold and one Shepherd.—Let it suffice to have glanced at this high theme: we only observe that the intercessory prayer of our Lord clearly and strongly bespeak his love and good-will to all mankind. It is, in a certain sense, his will that his people should be one, not only for their own benefit, but also for the benefit of the world. The promotion and maintenance of unity, is a duty that we owe to Christ, to ourselves, and to our fellow-creatures.

In conclusion; We can only call upon you to consider the intercession of our Saviour for his Church, and learn how to pray for yourselves and for others. You may here see the glory, excellence, and genuine spirit of the Gospel; and you may here learn no small part of your duty as mem-



bers of Christ's redeemed and sanctified body. If you are partakers of enlightening and renewing grace, you enter, in different measures, into these things; and you do not estimate your attainments in piety too highly. The more you hear, read, and meditate; the more you see, feel, and apprehend of divine things; the clearer is your view, and the stronger is your conviction of the immensity and grandeur that belong to the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. There may be a dwarfish sort of Christians who think loftily of themselves and of their acquirements: but the wise and sound Christian will always be humble, and think of himself in a lowly manner. Such Christians we wish you to be. Be always humble; be always diligent; be always, through grace, advancing in the divine life. No limits can be put to religious attainment; for as long as we are upon earth, more is to be known, and experienced, and performed. Religion is spiritual, infinite, and eternal: and in proportion as you are really the subjects, progressively and increasingly, of divine influence, you will find, in your happy experience, that you become at the same time more abased and more exalted; for a sense of your manifold imperfection will make you unfeignedly humble, while you will feel in your souls a consciousness that you are continually rising, as it were, into a higher sphere. How great, then, is the honour, and how vast and pure the blessedness of the true followers of Christ while upon earth! How glorious is the inheritance for which they are maturing amid the clouds and

storms of a perplexing world ! Surely your souls are stirred within you while we speak of these things. But in the contemplation of your present blessings and of your future prospects, never fail to remember that you are under the strongest possible obligations to be circumspect, laborious, and persevering. Encourage your souls by the solemn and delightful recollection of that high relation which you sustain as those who are united to Jehovah ; and let your days be spent in faith, holiness, and obedience ; in humility, love, and unity. Thus your satisfaction, as believers, will abound : in the days of temporal prosperity you will have that happiness which the world cannot give ; and in affliction you will have that comfort of which the world cannot deprive you : and when you enter into the unseen world, you will behold a glory and participate a bliss which far transcend our noblest conceptions at present, where all is unity and love for ever and ever.

SERMON XXVIII.


Spirit and Life.

ST. JOHN, vi. 63.

It is the spirit that quickeneth : the flesh profiteth nothing : the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

IF you had been travelling over a beautiful district, in which you had often gazed with feelings of transport on the charms of its lovely and diversified scenery, it is not unlikely that, when you had come to the borders of it, you would stand still, and look back on the regions which you had been exploring, and take one view more, as far as you could, of the vales, and hills, and woods, and lakes, and rivers which you had lately inspected with so much satisfaction to yourselves. Now for a considerable number of Sundays we have been examining a deeply interesting portion of God's holy word : and we are unwilling to quit it without inviting you to pause, and to take a brief retrospect, to speak so, of the divine scenery which we have contemplated, and to indulge in a few reflections on what we have seen and heard.

If we rightly estimate the Sacred Volume, we shall look upon it as the chart of our Eden, where we behold ' every tree that is pleasant to the sight



and good for food: the Tree of Life also' being 'in the midst of the garden.' And we are never better employed than when we are walking in the field of heavenly truth, hearing the voice of the Lord God, and learning the instructions of eternal wisdom. If, indeed, we properly consult our spiritual welfare, we shall often pause after our hallowed excursions, review what has passed before our vision, and meditate upon it with serious, humble, joyful, and devout minds.

We cannot easily conceive any persons to be in circumstances of greater responsibility than the Christians of this country in the present age. We have the full light of revelation. 'God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son:' and what the Son hath graciously revealed to us, is not kept back from us by any act of tyranny, and it is not darkened and distorted by the clouds of ignorance and the arts of superstition. The things of the spiritual world, as far as it hath pleased God to reveal them to us, are as clear to our spiritual vision as the things of the natural world are open to our natural vision in the noon-day light. We read and we hear 'in our own tongue, wherein we were born, the wonderful works of God.' While the humblest peasant has free access to the inspired Volume, and may listen to Him who spake as 'never man spake,' the accomplished scholar has all the stores of ancient and modern erudition and piety to remove his difficulties, to enlarge and purify his views, and to confirm and enliven his faith. But if our privileges may inspire us with

gratitude and joy, they ought also to inspire us, if not with awe and trembling, yet surely with thought and vigilance, lest we be found at last to have been unfaithful stewards of the trust committed to us.

The traveller may be satisfied with a single inspection of a fine country; and, though he may feel some regret as he stands on its borders, and casts over it a parting glance, yet his forgetfulness of what he has seen may be no cause of serious detriment to him, and there may be no need of his revisiting the scenes which he has viewed: yet with regard to the sacred Volume and ourselves, the case is very different; for we must study its hallowed pages, consider what we see and hear, and investigate every page again and again. And such must be our conduct for this plain reason;—we may suppose the natural eye to exhaust the riches and beauties of a landscape, but we cannot even suppose the spiritual eye to exhaust the riches and beauties of the chapters of revelation: and there is an important sense in which it is correct to say, that our best labours lead us only to an approximation to the truth. The constitution of things, by the divine appointment, is such, that the extent and the influence of revealed truth are only to be known and felt progressively, and that, in a great measure, in proportion to the thoughtful and prayerful labour that we expend upon it. Here, then, repetition is essential,—repetition, I mean, of inspection, thought, and prayer: and then after all our labour we shall be obliged to acknowledge the imperfection of our attainments, and the inexhaust-

ible nature of our subject. But we do not act as rational and accountable beings unless we duly consider the requirements consequent on our privileges, and act in agreement with them. Unimproved privileges will be as a mill-stone hanged about our necks, to sink us into deeper destruction. Our safety, happiness, and honour depend entirely on the wisdom and fidelity, on the decision and diligence, with which we habitually attend to the improvement of our inestimable blessings, according to the purposes for which they were conferred upon us.—But now directing your attention to the text,


I. I observe, that the Blessed Jesus hath spoken to us certain words—that is, He has revealed to us certain truths or doctrines which have been conveyed to us in a manner adapted to our nature and condition. In other terms, the mysteries of the kingdom of God are delineated before us in the language of mortals, and under imagery borrowed from the objects of the material world and the customs prevalent in human society. There is a sense in which the whole of the sacred Volume may be justly accounted the words of Christ. Such indeed they are, since they were given by the inspiration of His Spirit. We owe all sacred light, however communicated, to Him who is ‘the Light of the world.’ But we may limit the meaning of the term, and understand by it the words which Christ Himself spoke while upon earth, and which are recorded in the four Gospels. The whole of revelation is sacred, being from God: but we will not forbid you to attach, if you choose, a something that even

heightens sacredness to the words that proceeded from the lips of Emmanuel in the days of his humiliation. O, with what feelings of veneration and awe, of gratitude and delight, ought we to open the pages of the Gospels, and to listen to the very words of Him who was Wisdom, and Love, and Life! But, alas, our worldliness, our dulness, our want of reflection and feeling, our trifling familiarity with the Holy Book, are such as cause us to treat it too commonly as if it were only the production of human minds.

We have been directing our attention to the words of Jesus with his disciples in the guest-chamber. And what are the doctrines which He has taught us? I shall not aim to lay down before you in a regular order the various truths which He advanced on this affecting occasion. We see in these chapters the doctrine of the Ever-blessed Trinity; and we have in them reiterated instruction respecting the manifold operations of the Comforter. We are taught in them the nature of true piety, in the mysterious depths and sublimities of its spirituality, and in its sanctifying and practical effects. We see in them the high and consolatory doctrine of our union with Christ, as the immediate spring of all excellence and blessedness, both here and hereafter. We are taught in them the separation of the Church from the world, and its union in faith, love, and obedience: and we are also taught what we are to expect in a world of sin and folly, and how we are to demean ourselves in it. They inform us of the joys and sorrows of the true

believer, and of the never-failing virtue of believing prayer : and we are also led by them to direct our eyes to the glorious prospect that lies before us,—to the mansions in our Father's house, and to the immediate vision of our glorified Redeemer. In a word, we have in them all that is calculated to enlighten, elevate, and comfort our souls ; to form our spirit and regulate our conduct ; to show us the glory and blessedness of religion, the beauty and grandeur of Christ's Church, and the excellence and happiness of every one who is a faithful follower of the Redeemer. It is scarcely possible to conceive that any serious Christian can read them at any time, or in any circumstances, without deriving from them the largest benefit ; for here he will find what will enlarge his views, strengthen his faith, enliven his love, animate his hope, soothe his distress, relieve his perplexity, direct his conduct, and, in a word, invigorate the inner man with all the healthful influences of a sublime, and pure, and devout, and beneficent piety.

II. But instead of confining our attention to the words of Christ, with regard to the doctrines which they communicate to us, let us proceed to consider their peculiar character : ' they are spirit, and they are life.' It may be somewhat difficult to attach, in a positive manner, precise ideas to the terms of the text. Are we to understand by ' spirit' the high and spiritual meaning contained in Christ's words ; and by ' flesh,' the low and literal meaning of them ? Or are we to understand by ' spirit' our spiritual apprehension, and by ' flesh' our dull and




carnal apprehension, of them? But we will not take up your time with this question : we will only maintain, that, on either view of the words, we are led to the most important truths. Let it suffice to observe, that the words of Christ are spiritual in their nature, and vital in their effects. If we confine ourselves to a low and carnal view of them, or to a low and carnal apprehension of them, we sadly mistake the nature of the gospel, and we deprive ourselves of its blessings. Those doctrines are deep, spiritual, and efficient ; and it is in the view and in the experience of them as such, that we arrive at, and realize, the noblest and the best of all characters,—that of the wise and humble, the penitent and believing, the spiritual and holy and obedient follower of the blessed Jesus.

1. In order that you may enter a little into this subject, let us take a glance at the whole of our constitution. Our physical nature will be the first thing that arrests our attention. View man as the inhabitant of this material world, and we readily acknowledge that he is fearfully and wonderfully made. What is he but an accumulation of mystery? Unreflecting dulness does not regard at all the wonders that belong to our being : but surely all the works of the Creator,—and is not man the chief of His works?—deserve our serious thought. We know that our frame is composed of gross materials, and that it is nourished and supported by the gross elements from which it derived its origin and with which it is surrounded, and also that after death it is to be resolved again into those elements.

But how exquisite is the human frame! How admirably adapted to the place which it occupies in the visible universe! How skilfully furnished with faculties, that it may hold converse, as it were, with the objects around it! We have about us a visible and tangible world, and we have powers to contemplate it, and to act upon its materials, and to make all things subservient to our use, and to mould and fashion them according to our will. Here we see man acting as a material being upon the world of matter, partly from necessity, and partly from choice: and, as the result of his labours and of his ingenuity, he not only satisfies his physical wants and provides for his physical welfare, but he loads and adorns the surface of our globe with all those monuments of toil and art which are the proofs of his accomplishments as a highly civilized being. It is true that Mind is employed in all this: but it is also true, that Mind is here employed on Matter: and it is here that we see the full display of the animal and worldly life; that we find those who are not improperly called the men of the world—whose energies are engaged in the various movements and modifications of matter, and whose happiness, if happiness can be theirs, is derived from this source. We might stop here, and mourn over the multitudes of our species whose life, from the cradle to the tomb, is a life of sense—animal and secular. But we pass on; and,

2. We consider man as the possessor of what we call Mind, or Intellect, or Reason. Man has within him a soul,—a spiritual and immortal nature, which




has its peculiar faculties, energies, and agency. It is by the mind that we turn in, as it were, and explore our own nature; and by it also we go out, and contemplate the visible and the invisible worlds. Truth is to the mind what light is to the eye: and as we have the knowledge of the truth, or mentally see in the truth, we can readily discover the moral relations of things, in all cases which are of essential interest to us, and make our conclusions respecting them. We remember the past; we perceive the present; we anticipate the future: by our judgments we reason, and by our imaginations we combine and we colour things as we please. We consider objects and actions, and exercise choice: we consider the moral characters of good and evil, and conscience approves the one and condemns the other. And thus in the human mind, imperfect and inadequate as our knowledge of it may be, we have a new series of wonders, a fresh accumulation of mystery, to excite our admiration.

But, to cut short our reflections, we will now suppose that a man does not give the pre-eminence to his physical nature, and make himself entirely the sordid and low-thoughted drudge of our tangible world, but that he gives more or less of pre-eminence to Mind: and in this case he rises more or less into the character of a mental or intelligent agent: and he may become a philosopher, a historian, a mathematician, a linguist, or a poet, according to his peculiar talents and the department of knowledge which he selects for cultivation. And here again we confine our remarks to one point:


we will suppose our mental agent to apply himself to the study of theology ; and what is the result ? He obtains, perhaps, an exact knowledge of the sacred languages ; and he obtains, perhaps, a speculative knowledge of the facts and doctrines and precepts of revealed religion. They form truths which he deposits in his mind, and of which he is able to speak with readiness. His attainments, as to variety and extent and solidity, will very much depend on his capacity, education, and circumstances. But whether we look to the accomplished scholar, to the master of many languages, who can rove at will in the various provinces of philosophy and history, or to the peasant who knows no language but his own, and whose reading is almost limited to the one book, the attainments of each are of the same kind : they are purely intellectual ; that is, they result merely from the exertion of their natural faculties as rational or intelligent creatures.

We see not the slightest reason why any one should not by his natural powers become intimate with the contents of the inspired Volume, and expatiate, with splendour of thought and fluency of language, with solidity of argument and exactness of discrimination, on its most hallowed and sublime discoveries. Theology, in all its departments, may be made a science and a study, like any other branch of knowledge. In the full and free, the candid and laborious use of his natural powers, it is, undoubtedly, possible for a man to make himself an accomplished theologian : and in the estimation



of many, who do not enter rightly into the spirituality of religion, he may be accounted a Christian in the highest and deepest sense of that term. We know of no topic whatever within the compass of theology which a man may not explore by the exertion of his natural powers. Even the spirituality and the life of religion—and it is a thought which may well make the best of us to tremble—may be reasoned upon, and may occupy a distinguished place in our theological system; and our pages, in the delineation of it, may abound with many a glowing paragraph and many a thrilling expression: and yet the whole of our statement may be nothing more than the product of a soaring intellect, of excited feelings, and of a splendid imagination. If it is possible to speculate on Mercy and Justification, without being partakers of them, it is also as possible to speculate on Grace and Sanctification, without being partakers of them. The speculator on Mercy may sink into the dregs of antinomianism; and the speculator on grace may rise to the sphere and move in the element of a morbid sentimentality or of a fervid enthusiasm; while both may be alike dead in sin, alienated and unrenewed. If the former be an insect in the mire, the latter is only an insect that moves on gaudy wings; and neither of them will endure the storms and changes that lie before them: for the welfare of the soul depends on something of a higher order than extensive knowledge, acute ideas, gorgeous fancies, and brilliant eloquence. And here we are led,

3. To consider another subject which brings us



to see the force of our text. We assert that a marked distinction is to be made between religion in the soul of man as the fruit of his own unaided intellectual efforts, and religion in the soul of man as spirit and life by a peculiar agency from above. The physical man, to use such a phrase, with slight mental movement, accounts himself a real Christian because he attends the stated ordinances of religion : and the intellectual man deems himself a real Christian because he is conversant with the doctrines and laws, and perhaps with the spirit, of Christianity in a speculative manner. Let it not be thought that we blame either of them on account of what they really do in religion : if we blame them, it is because they do not do enough ; because they stop short of the proper mark. Our position is simply this,—the words of Christ must not only be speculatively acknowledged, but they must be individually and experimentally felt, to be spirit and life. What, we ask, is essential to real godliness ? And we answer, Not mere knowledge, or ideas, or language, or mere orthodoxy, or fine fancies, to whatever extent we may possess them, or in whatever captivating manner we may represent them. These may exist within us ; and yet they are not unquestionable proofs that genuine internal Christianity exists within us. We may have these, from the lowest measure of them, up to that high measure of them which renders us conspicuous in the view of our admiring species ; and yet we may be only natural men.


We are not here stating a subtilty which it is



difficult to comprehend : on the contrary, the matter is exceedingly plain and obvious. The difference between a sound and an unsound mind, between an intellectual and a spiritual mind, between a mind acting by its own natural powers and with renewed powers, is as clear and as specific an object for our contemplation, as is a diseased and a healthy body ; as is a living, breathing, warm, and active man, and a dead, senseless, cold, and motionless statue. We can conceive our powers to be naturally disordered, as indeed they are : and we can conceive our powers to be divinely acted upon, as indeed they must be before we are true spiritual Christians. Between the intellectual man and the spiritual man there is no real difference in the powers themselves which they possess : the difference between them lies in the moral state of their powers ; in the established frame, in the cherished and habitual feelings of their souls ; not in their mental notions about sacred things, but in their spiritual apprehensions of them. And we are utterly at a loss to discover how this subject can, to a calm and reflecting mind, be at all perplexing or difficult.

But our text is so far of clear interpretation, that we need not approach the verge of obscurity. Our blessed Lord asserts that His words are spirit and life : and now we maintain that these two attributes cannot be disjoined. If they are spirit to us, they will also be life to us. If we receive them in a right manner, and according to their real nature, they will put forth a sacred and a mighty

efficiency on our souls, and they will inspire it with various emotions, and they will impart to it, not only the peace which springs from trust, but also energy, holiness, and satisfaction. Religion will not be regarded in its mere objective character, as revealing things at a distance, and prospects at a distance, and propositions about which we are to reason, and on which we are to ground our system; but it will have a subjective existence in our own souls, so that we shall feel more or less in correspondence with what we see, and we shall be constrained to act more and more in accordance with the rectitude inculcated by the divine law. There will be a moral harmony between the whole of revelation, considered as truth, spirit, and life, and our own souls, considered as thinking and feeling agents. And as the light of divine truth rises progressively on the soul, so does the influence of divine truth descend progressively on the soul: so that in the case of the real Christian, as long as he is a sojourner upon earth, will there be a strenuous effort, and a strong desire, and a toiling and a struggling to gain higher attainments in piety: and these will not be so much sought in the increase of theological knowledge as in the increase of efficient principles and vital affections; in all those movements and workings of a soul which is humbly, and adoringly, and yet joyfully aspiring after all the fulness of God. We have no hesitation in saying, that we value at a very low rate a vast deal of the speculation, and logic, and debate, and controversy of our age, however splendid or erudite or keen it




may be. We see a theology in it; but we do not feel enough of piety in it. We see in it the scholar, the philosopher, the critic; and we hear in it the reasoner, the declaimer, the theorist, the projector; but we do not feel in it, as we wish, the humility, the meekness, the tenderness, the love, the faith, the simplicity, the modesty, the solemnity of the pure scriptural Christian. We find more of the head in these works than we find of the heart; more about religion, than of religion itself.

In the palpable article, therefore, of spiritual effect, we have a test by which we may try our religion, whether it be divine and spiritual, or whether it be human and intellectual. We see the constitution of our nature, and we see our circumstances; and if we reflect rightly on both, our conclusion will be—that no employment of our mere natural powers on sacred truth can make us true Christians. Before we can be such characters, or in our becoming such, a restoration of our faculties is essential: and this is effected by the putting forth of a power from above, by virtue of which spiritual things are apprehended and experienced by the soul as spiritual; that is, by which the words of Christ are really to the soul both spirit and life.

We cannot possibly better consult our spiritual welfare, our safety and happiness, than by questioning ourselves, not only what we know of the truth, but what we feel of the truth, as it is in Jesus. It may be needful at times to look to our notions and to our arguments: but it is needful at all times to

be looking to our principles and affections ; to the bent and current of our thoughts and feelings. You may review, and we hope you will review, those chapters on which we have spoken so much to you : but we would have you examine yourselves, not only as to the mental admission or reception of the many truths which they contain, but as to the spiritual frame which your admission or reception of them has produced, and continually maintains, within you ; and also as to the practical control which it exercises over the whole of your conversation in the world. You profess to receive the doctrine of the Trinity, of spiritual influence, of union with Christ, of the final blessedness of the godly. You allow that religion is spiritual in its nature, holy in its operations, practical in its effects. You acknowledge that the world is sinful, and that separation from it is essential to piety. But, to proceed no further, after all this admission and acknowledgment, in what manner do you hold these sentiments, and what influence have they upon you ? Are they indistinct, or are they clear and well-defined, notions in the intellect ? Are they the mere cold and inefficient articles of your creed ? Or are they truths which, to speak so, are incorporated in such a manner with the very substance of your souls that they are to you a hallowed light, a prevailing energy, a pervading life ; the subjects of your meditation and prayer, and the springs of your joy ; in short, spiritual forces, to use such an expression, which keep you, internally and externally, from the evil of the heart and



of the world, and compel you inwardly to the truth of holiness and righteousness?

And here, though we are exceeding ~~in haste~~ in a small discourse, there is one point to which we need to speak a few sentences. We have taught us, that there may be a profession of a ~~high and~~ ~~great~~ ~~valuable~~ as well as of ~~extensive~~ ~~and~~ ~~valuable~~ knowledge. If, then, when we have a ~~high and~~ ~~great~~ ~~valuable~~ of religion, and when we have a ~~high and~~ ~~great~~ ~~valuable~~ of religion, and ~~enter~~ ~~into~~ ~~a~~ ~~higher~~ ~~and~~ ~~better~~ ~~sphere~~, we may ~~be~~ ~~able~~ ~~to~~ ~~discern~~ ~~ourselves~~, and still standing on ~~the~~ ~~ground~~ ~~as~~ ~~to~~ ~~our~~ ~~salvation~~, it is of the ~~greatest~~ ~~importance~~ ~~that~~ ~~we~~ ~~should~~ ~~be~~ ~~able~~ ~~to~~ ~~distin-~~ ~~guish~~ ~~between~~ ~~a~~ ~~genuine~~ ~~and~~ ~~a~~ ~~spurious~~ ~~spirituality~~ ~~and~~ ~~between~~ ~~that~~ ~~which~~ ~~is~~ ~~divine~~, ~~and~~ ~~that~~ ~~which~~ ~~is~~ ~~human~~. Now the whole of this subject, ~~large~~ ~~and~~ ~~intricate~~ ~~as~~ ~~it~~ ~~is~~, resolves itself into this question, When can we justly say that the words of Christ are to us spirit and life? They are evidently such, we answer, when we really abound in the fruit of the Spirit—in 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.' Contrition, humility, self-abasement, patience, forbearance, growing deadness to the world, spiritual-mindedness, resignation to God's will, retirement, silence, intense thirsting after universal holiness, delight in Christ, simply looking to Him, and following Him in his spirit and conduct—it is in these and in such things, and not in high speculations, and bright fancies, and zealous and clamorous profession, that the best proofs, as we think, are found

of a genuine spirituality. We value notion, and action, and profession : we value extent and accuracy in the first, zeal and benevolence in the second, and courage and decision in the third : and yet, to be satisfied of the true spirituality of any man's religion, we look more to his temper ; and here especially to the mild and humble virtues of Christianity, most alien from our corrupt nature, and therefore, in general, the best proofs, wherever they prevail, of its being sanctified.—But we cannot enlarge on this subject.

But one observation must be here made ; and it is one that is sufficiently humiliating to us all. We may deplore the state and the conduct of him who is governed by his physical nature :—and yet are not the best of us too much under the influence of our natural passions and appetites ? And, again, we may deplore the state and conduct of those who make theology a mere matter of intellect, and mistake orthodoxy for faith, and accurate notions for Christian graces :—and yet are not many of us, not to say the most of us, far more attentive, to use such terms, to the soundness of the mind than we are to the soundness of the heart ? If we mean to escape delusion and its awful consequences, we cannot remember too carefully, that piety in human beings is always more or less corrupted by some impure admixture or other. The truth may be held in a listless or inert manner, or in an intellectual and controversial manner, or in a sentimental and imaginative manner : and thus we may be cold in religion, or acute and logical in religion, or fan-



tastic and morbid in religion ; and in this last case we may mistake our sickly feelings for the exquisiteness of a true moral vitality, and account the veriest proofs of moral disease for the veriest proofs of moral health. The words of Jesus, however, have not one excellence, but all excellence : they are Truth, and Spirit, and Life : and the real reception of them as such involves in it the light, the vigour, the health, and the happiness of soul. But the best and holiest things are liable to abuse : and we ought to be aware of our danger, in order that we may seek what is good, and guard against every form of evil.

In concluding these discourses, we know of nothing better that we can do than to press upon your attention a truth which you have heard again and again—the necessity of the manifold influence of the Holy Spirit on the soul, and consequently your duty to seek it with earnestness. The soul is so disordered in all its faculties, in all its operations, that without a restoring might it cannot discover and embrace the various treasures which the gospel reveals to it, and offers for its reception ; and therefore it cannot realize the blessedness of a genuine piety. He knows nothing of himself as he ought to know, who is not truly and deeply conscious of that disorder which pervades the whole constitution of man, intellectually and morally considered. But as in the Atonement of Christ we have ample provision for our pardon, justification, and acceptance with God, so in the Holy Spirit we have an ample provision for our recovery of the

image of God. We cannot question the sufficiency of the atoning blood that was shed upon the cross ; and we cannot question the sufficiency and virtue of renovating grace. But the mere existence of this provision, and our knowledge of it, and our imaginations about it, by no means necessarily involve the participation of it. There is a possibility, Christians as we are, of our not having the Spirit of Christ, and therefore of our being none of His. We may be without the Spirit, and therefore carnally minded, worldly, ungodly persons. Every one should carry in his bosom an ever-abiding recollection, that the work of the Holy Spirit is essential to his salvation,—or, rather, that his salvation consists in his being a real partaker of the Spirit : ‘for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.’ The work of the Spirit implies the illumination of the understanding, the renewal of the mind and heart, and, further, all those fruits which result from real knowledge, sound principles, and holy affections. Here we see salvation ;—the enjoyment of divine mercy and grace, and the exhibition of all holiness and obedience, according to the gospel of the blessed God. If any one be without some genuine experience of this work of the Spirit, we can look upon him in no other light than as being a Christian in name, privileges, and profession, but not in reality.

Your earnestness, therefore, in seeking, in the diligent and devout use of all your means of grace, the influences of the Holy Spirit should in some measure correspond with their importance. You

cannot be too strenuous, single-hearted and persevering in imploring the Father of mercies to give you this inestimable benefit, and to give you more and more of it through the whole of life, in order that you may be more wise in mind, and holy in heart, and upright in conduct. It is not only beautiful as a matter of speculation, but it is delightful as an unquestionable fact, that 'the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' And it is a most pleasing employment of our minds, in the calm moments of hallowed meditation, to contemplate an immortal soul, in this dark and evil world, which has been visited by the saving operations of divine grace; and to follow it, from the first workings of an efficient piety, when it truly turns to God in Christ Jesus, and to the way of righteousness, through all the darkness and distress, the conflicts and difficulties, the doubts and fears, the perplexity and solicitude, the mist and thorns and briers of its earlier career; and then to watch it on a smoother path and under a more serene sky, acting, in its joy and strength and increasing maturity, the laborious part of a workman, and the courageous part of a soldier, and the faithful part of a steward, and the cautious part of a sentinel; and then to observe it when, prosecuting its onward road with an undiverted eye and with an unfailing heart, it is climbing as it were a towering hill on which a splendid sunshine is settled, whence it can look down on a world which it has renounced, and whence it can look upward to a peaceful and un-

clouded sky, and whence it can look onward to the bright and illimitable regions of the everlasting Canaan. This is the course, this is the history of a soul that is under the control and guidance of the sanctifying Spirit: and we wish you, dear Brethren, often to employ your minds in a contemplation so delightful, not to cherish rash presumptions or wild fancies, but to elevate and animate your souls in a real godliness.

We regard as utterly worthless the conflicting statements of some of the master spirits of our day, on the subject of spiritual religion. The fact of truth is, that we can put no limits to the attainments of a diligent and faithful soul in piety: and if we are now with the Israelites involved in the mist that is resting on the banks of the Arnon, there is no reason why we should not hope to gain with Moses the heights of Abarim, and to look in the mild rapture of expectation on the future inheritance. And the fact of duty is, that we must be daily making all efforts, by the use of sacred ordinances, by reading the Scriptures, by prayer, by meditation, by vigilance, by activity in all good services, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ—in all the views, principles, and affections,—in all the life,—of a substantial and healthful piety. And, again, the matter of fact with respect to Experience is, that we must regard it as a most sacred reality,—however it may be branded in any quarter as fanaticism or enthusiasm,—but that we must not make out an experience for ourselves from any thing that we read or hear, but wait upon

God, rely on the Spirit, and commit ourselves to Him. We abhor theory on this subject ; and for this obvious reason, that an accumulation and just sifting of the experience of the wise and good, however it is substantially the same, will have so much circumstantial or individual variety as to demonstrate the worthlessness of any human theory. We may be Christians, and even eminent Christians, without being conversant with what some would account the infallible proofs of an exalted piety. We are as little disposed to congratulate the person who only puts before us a lofty and a splendid delineation of his feelings, as we are to render sad and sorrowful and dispirited the person whose delineation of his feelings shows that he is more familiar with shade than with sunshine, with conflict than victory, with suffering than enjoyment. That all-wise, all-gracious God, who gives us our different allotments of temporal good, gives us also our different allotments of spiritual good. This we think to be true ; but then, according to a fixed law in His proceedings, it is equally true, that, as diligence and prudence lead to an increase of earthly store, so do diligence and fidelity lead to an increase of spiritual store. ‘ Whosoever hath,’ or improveth what he hath, ‘ to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.’

Finally, my Brethren, be it your care, as it is your wisdom, to choose the good part,—that mercy and grace, that blessedness for time and eternity,—of which you have heard so much in these discourses. To ask is to receive ; to seek is to find ;

to knock is to have the gate of mercy and life opened to you. Such is the love, the compassion, the goodness of our heavenly Father:—and how can you endure the thought of refusing his gifts, and of ruining your souls for ever?

Having, through grace, chosen the good part, be faithful to your choice. There will be evil within you, tarnishing your virtues, corrupting your duties, and enfeebling your efforts, which may well make you at all times contrite, penitent, humble, self-debased before God. But wink at no evil; cherish no evil; hold parley with no evil; tolerate no evil. While you fix your eyes on the riches of redeeming mercy, fix them also on the beauty of unspotted holiness: and while the most complete and simple trust in the mercy of God in Christ Jesus is all your confidence and all your hope, let nothing short of universal holiness be the object of your unvarying aim. Dissatisfied with yourselves you may be, you will be, and you must be: but if you devoutly pray for, and diligently seek, the increase of faith, love, hope, and humility, you will experience the truth, power, and grace of our blessed Redeemer. In the world you will have tribulation: but in Him you will have peace. Therefore, ‘Beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.’

THE END.

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